

Union and Communion:  
The Mystical Spirituality of James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905)

by

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I dedicate this research project to

Dr Ralph Waldo Christensen  
(1923-2018)

my missions mentor at  
Rosebank Bible College,  
Johannesburg, South Africa  
(1978-1979, 1984-1985).

'Dr Ralph' and his wife Helen,  
American missionaries with The Evangelical Alliance Mission (TEAM),  
served in South Africa for over fifty years.  
His doctoral research took ten years to complete,  
and the entire 596-paged thesis was typed by his wife Helen on a manual typewriter.

'The Implications of the Biblical Phrase "In Christ" for the Christian Mission'  
(Doctor of Theology, University of South Africa, December 1979),  
was highly appraised by the late Dr David Bosch (1929-1992),  
the influential South African missiologist.

With special thanks to  
Dr Ralph for inspiring me to think biblically;  
and for his and Helen's relational way of being 'in Christ',  
which exemplified a non-traditional and cross-cultural way of being missionary.

**DECLARATION**

I, Judy Elise Lam,  
declare that

*Union and Communion:*

*The Mystical Spirituality of James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905)*

is my own work  
and that all the sources that I have used or quoted  
have been indicated and acknowledged by means of the references.

**SIGNED:**



**DATE:**

20th January 2023.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Jubilateo Deo!* All praise and glory to God for providing me with the necessary spiritual resources, physical stamina, and mental capacity for this PhD journey, which certainly has been one of faith, hope, love and grace. This research has examined and sharpened me on many levels, as it is integral to my vocation as a missionary and spiritual director. It has also been conducted during a most trying period of life (notably, the political unrest in Hong Kong and the Covid-19 pandemic); however, through the support of people near and far, the final product attests to the tried and tested principle, that God makes all things beautiful in God's time.

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Several libraries and CIM collections also deserve to be mentioned, namely: the CIM Archives at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London; the OMF UK office, Seven Oaks, Kent; the OMF Hong Kong office; the Special Archives at the Hong Kong Baptist University; Chung Chi Library, at the Chinese University of Hong Kong; China Graduate School of Theology; and Lutheran Theological Seminary. Without their extensive collections and online resources, this research would not have been possible.

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## SUMMARY AND KEY TERMS

### Summary

James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905), founder of the China Inland Mission in June 1865, is one of the most prominent names in the history of Protestant missions. He authored *Union and Communion*, a short devotional commentary on the Song of Songs, published in 1894. Like many of his other writings, it is suffused with mystical elements. Taylor's mystical dimension, however, has been eclipsed by an overemphasis on his intriguing 19th century missionary endeavours in China; in addition, his writings have been eclipsed by popular missionary biographies and secondary sources. Through a focus on his soul landscape and intimacy with God, this research has reconnected the mystical threads for an in-depth understanding of the relationship between his mystical spirituality and his missionary spirituality. By recovering Taylor's mystical wisdom (through the biblical frameworks of the Song of Songs, the Fourth Gospel, and the apostle Paul's writings), the research suggests that Taylor be recognised and re-visioned as a Protestant mystic cum missionary.

### Key Terms

James Hudson Taylor; 19<sup>th</sup> century British Protestant missionary in China; *Union and Communion*; Song of Songs; The Exchanged Life; Christian mysticism; mystical spirituality; missionary spirituality; mystical text; mystical transformation; mystical path; yin-yang; paschal mystery; *mysterium tremendum*; soul care; soul love; soul rest; soul work; *askesis*; *kenosis*; *theosis*; *epektasis*.

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# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Formulating the research problem

#### 1.1.1 Background

James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905),<sup>1</sup> from Barnsley, Yorkshire, is cited as ‘one of the greatest missionaries of all time’ – and ‘one of the four or five most influential foreigners who came to China in the nineteenth century for any purpose, religious or secular’ (Latourette [1929]/2009:382). ‘Hudson Taylor’, as he is usually known, founded the China Inland Mission<sup>2</sup> (CIM) in June 1865 – after an intense period of writing *China’s Spiritual Need and Claims*,<sup>3</sup> pleading the cause of China’s unevangelised millions among British churches and mission societies, and wrestling with God in prayer on Brighton Beach. Founding a non-denominational agency for inland China was a momentous decision and step of faith,<sup>4</sup> as it ushered in a new era of missions at a time when there were only 91 Protestant missionaries in the whole of China, all confined to the five treaty ports (Chang *et al.* 2005:39). Dubbed ‘The Pigtail Mission’ for its Chinese inculturation and contextualisation policies (2005:48, 174-175), the CIM pioneered a way for Protestant missions into China’s interior provinces. By 1905, the year of Taylor’s death, it constituted one-quarter of the entire Protestant mission force in China, and had developed into ‘an international octopus’ (Austin 2007:xxiv).<sup>5</sup> In fact, it was by far the largest of “faith missions” of the 19th and 20th centuries (Latourette 1944:326); hence Latourette’s view that the CIM’s story and its development is in some respects ‘the most remarkable chapter in the history of Christian missions in China’ ([1929]/2009:382).

James Hudson Taylor went on to become ‘the father of the modern faith-missions movement’ (Tucker 2011:427-429), by directly or indirectly influencing ‘the founding of over forty new mission boards’ (Tucker 1983:289). The CIM became ‘the pioneer and prototype’

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of Taylor’s life and legacy, the pictorial and bilingual Chinese-English work by Chang *et al.* (2005) is highly recommended, as James H. Taylor III (1929-2009) served on the Editorial Committee. Several chronological outlines are also helpful for a succinct overview, namely: Broomhall (1915:366-371); Broomhall (1929:237-241); Taylor & Taylor ([1932]/1958:167-169); Steer (1995:143-149); Broomhall (2018:229-234).

<sup>2</sup> Taylor described the Prussian evangelist to China, Karl Friedrich August Gutzlaff (1803-1851), as ‘the grandfather of the China Inland Mission’ (Chang *et al.* 2005:16-17; Broomhall 2005a:xiv, 3-5).

<sup>3</sup> This influential work was assisted by Taylor’s first wife Maria, and published in October 1865 (Chang *et al.* 2005:39-43). Broomhall states that it was inspired by Davies’ *China, and her Spiritual Claims*, published in 1845; and shaped Taylor’s articulation of China’s current status for the churches in Britain (2005a:587-588).

<sup>4</sup> On June 27, 1865, two days after Taylor’s prayer on Brighton Beach, he opened a bank account for the mission and deposited 10 British pounds; George Pearse and William Berger offered valuable assistance and companionship in these early days of the CIM (Chang *et al.* 2005:41-42).

<sup>5</sup> The CIM membership at the time numbered 800 men and women, at 60 stations in 15 out of 18 provinces of China (Austin 2007:xxiv).

of ‘faith missions’ (Bosch [1991]/2011:340),<sup>6</sup> giving definition to a ‘completely new missionary movement’ and impetus to initiatives such as the Africa Inland Mission, and the Sudan Inland Mission (Fiedler 1994:11), among others.

Within the East Asian context, and among those serving in Chinese ministries, the beloved name ‘*Dai Desheng*’ (戴德生),<sup>7</sup> ‘brings expressions of admiration, even reverence’ (Doyle 2015b:121). The Taylor legacy is admired for its uninterrupted continuation for over 150 years, as succeeding generations have followed in China-related ministries (Chang *et al.* 2005:121-125).<sup>8</sup> The longevity of the mission is another cause for admiration. After the ‘reluctant exodus’ of Western missionaries from the People’s Republic of China during the period 1949-1953, the CIM headquarters was temporarily relocated from Shanghai to Hong Kong, and finally to Singapore (1951-1952).<sup>9</sup> In 1964-1965, the mission was renamed the ‘*Overseas Missionary Fellowship*’, commonly known as ‘*OMF*’, continuing as a faith mission and retaining Taylor’s seminal faith principles in its policies. Renamed ‘*OMF International*’ in the 1990’s, the mission currently has approximately 1,400 workers from over 40 nationalities, serving among 100 people groups in East Asia, and among the Asian diaspora around the globe (Dowsett & Berry 2014:338).

### 1.1.2 *The rationale for the research*

Taylor’s life and legacy has generated a wealth of literature over the past 150 years;<sup>10</sup> however, little in-depth research has been conducted specifically on the subject of Taylor’s spirituality.<sup>11</sup> The lacuna is surprising given Wigram’s assertion that Taylor’s ‘distinctive hermeneutic and example shaped the collective spirituality of the CIM which eventually became a template for subsequent expression of mission in the conservative evangelical tradition’ (2007:6). Nevertheless, the time is ripe for an academic study of Taylor’s spirituality that would fill the

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<sup>6</sup> Fiedler (1994:11) defines a ‘faith mission’ as ‘a mission which traces its origin or (more often) the origin of its principles directly or indirectly back to the China Inland Mission (CIM)’.

<sup>7</sup> Taylor’s legacy was officially memorialized in the city of Zhenjiang, Jiangsu Province, in June 2018, at the Opening Ceremony of the Hudson Taylor Memorial (where Hudson and Maria’s gravestones are laid). An online article contains further details: <https://omf.org/us2/hudson-and-maria-taylors-graves-found-in-china/>

<sup>8</sup> James Hudson Taylor III (1929-2009), or ‘Jim’ Taylor, served as OMF’s General Director for about a decade from August 1980 (Chang *et al.* 2005:160). His son ‘Jamie’ (or ‘JHT4’) is the current president of China Evangelical Seminary, Taiwan.

<sup>9</sup> The period 1951-2005 is well captured in Chang *et al.* (2005:150-167), from the departure of the last CIM missionaries from Shanghai to the subsequent decisions, leadership changes, geographical relocations, and the transitions into OMF, etc.

<sup>10</sup> ‘More has been written about Hudson Taylor than almost any other nineteenth-century missionary except David Livingstone’ (Austin 2007:25). Interestingly, Livingstone (1813-1873), the famous Scottish missionary doctor in Africa, had initially intended to serve in China (Larsen 2003:366).

<sup>11</sup> A general discussion is provided from three different perspectives, by Reilly (1978:102-110), Wigram (2007:79-115), and Anderson (2013); these sources will be elaborated in the Literature Review.

gap, especially in light of the surge of interest in the topic of ‘mission and spirituality’ that has ‘multiplied exponentially in the 21st century’ since the 1970’s (Chevalier 2017:323),<sup>12</sup> coupled with the ‘new attention to the spiritual dimension’ from the global south that ‘is stamping the character of mission in our time’ (Ma & Ross 2013:9).

The contribution of Taylor’s spiritual legacy to Protestant missions is a vast subject beyond the scope of this research; hence a preferred in-depth focus, which may be metaphorised as ‘*an inland mission to the soul landscape of Hudson Taylor*’. The rationale for an inner focus is underscored by Bebbington’s remark that the ‘inward life ..., especially in the evangelical tradition has not received the attention it deserves’ (cited by Wigram 2007:3–4; Lam 2016:7);<sup>13</sup> yet, holiness was a major theme in the roots of the spirituality of the 19th century. In Taylor’s case specifically, the *leitmotif of union and communion* in his life and writings has not been given adequate attention, in spite of his emphasis on personal holiness. To cite one example, he addresses the neglect of ‘personal communion’ in the zeal and activism of ministry and exhorts readers to ‘take time to be holy’ (Taylor [1894]/1931:31-32). Therefore, the primary purpose of this study is to explore Taylor’s inner life through the leitmotif of union and communion, which is identified in this research as the hermeneutical key to his ‘*mystical spirituality*’<sup>14</sup> and the *dynamos* of his missionary praxis. The secondary purpose is to draw implications for the cultivation of *soul care* in contemporary Protestant missionary spirituality.

A vital aspect of Taylor’s mystical spirituality is his affinity with the Song of Songs, which has received little attention in contemporary literature. It cannot be underestimated, however, based on a striking observation by his contemporaries: ‘To those who knew Hudson Taylor best in later years, nothing was more characteristic than his love for the Song of Solomon and the way in which it expressed his personal relationship to the Lord’ (Taylor & Taylor [1911]/2005:443; 1965:134). By way of background, in 1857 during Hudson and Maria’s difficult courtship,<sup>15</sup> which was vehemently yet unjustly opposed by Maria’s guardian, the young lovers found consolation in the Song of Songs (Taylor & Taylor 1965:134-135;

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<sup>12</sup> Chevalier (2017) examines the developing discourse and missiological literature since Bosch’s *A Spirituality of the Road* (1979) and Reilly’s article ‘Developing a Missionary Spirituality’ (1980).

<sup>13</sup> Bebbington notes four main characteristics of evangelicalism, or ‘four qualities that have been the special marks of Evangelical religion’, namely: ‘*conversionism*, the belief that lives need to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called *crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice on the cross’ (1989:2-3).

<sup>14</sup> *Mystical spirituality*, as defined in 1.2.2 below, refers to the intimate or depth dimension of spirituality.

<sup>15</sup> Hudson married 21-year-old Maria nee Dyer on January 20, 1858, in Shanghai. After twelve fulfilling years of marriage and ministry, Maria died of cholera on July 23, 1870, aged 33, and was buried in Zhenjiang. She bore eight children of whom four survived (Herbert, Howard, Maria, and Charles); her gravestone was also engraved with the Chinese names of her four deceased children (Chang *et al.* 2005:53-54).

Pollock [1962]/1996:80-83; Lam 2016:3). In 1882-1883, while Taylor was travelling in China, the six-to-eight-month period away from Jennie,<sup>16</sup> caused deep and overwhelming suffering; yet, it was during this time that he was found ‘feasting’ on the Song of Songs (Broomhall 2005b:404-405). These insights which he shared at the CIM conferences (Anqing, June 1882; and Shanxi, 1886) had a powerful spiritual impact on the CIM collectively (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:358-359, 391-395, 621). Consequently, Taylor’s reflections on the ‘Song of Solomon’ were included as a devotional series in *China’s Millions* (May 1891 to June 1892), followed by the publication of the booklet *Union and Communion* in 1894. This booklet ‘reveals his heart possibly more than any other of his writings’, and was ‘the most widely circulated’ of all his devotional writings (Broomhall 1929:138).<sup>17</sup> Given the wide readership of *China’s Millions*<sup>18</sup> in the UK, and the impact of the Song of Songs on Taylor’s public ministry in later years, it follows that he became known to many as ‘the most practically helpful expositor’ of the Song of Songs (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:358-359, 391-395, 621). These multiple impressions underscore the leitmotif of union and communion as the hermeneutical cue to Taylor’s mystical spirituality, and the *raison d’être* for a study of his inner life.

An in-depth investigation of *Union and Communion* is also motivated by his acknowledgement of the general neglect of the Song, coupled with his personal commendation of it, as follows: ‘Few portions of the Word will help the devout student more in the pursuit of this all-important knowledge of God than the much-neglected Song of Solomon’ (Taylor [1894]/1931:1-2). The Song of Songs, however, is a complex study given its significance as the ‘mystical text par excellence’ in the Judeo-Christian tradition (McGinn 2006:3-5), and its reputation as one of the deepest, most difficult, and most disputed of biblical books.<sup>19</sup> Since Taylor’s approach to the biblical Song is allegorical and Christological, in relation to deepening

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<sup>16</sup> Taylor’s second wife, Jennie nee Faulding, was among the first CIM recruits, and worked in Hangzhou (Chang *et al.* 2005:44-49). Hudson and Jennie married at Regent’s Park Chapel, London, on November 28, 1871; she bore two children, Ernest and Amy; and was a pioneer in the relief work during the Shanxi drought of 1876-1879 (2005:55-56, 66-67). Jennie died of cancer on July 30, 1904, in Davos, Switzerland, and was buried there. On Taylor’s final journey to China, he died in Changsha on June 03, 1905; and was buried next to the grave of Maria and their four children (2005:116-117).

<sup>17</sup> *Union and Communion* has gone through several revisions and titles. The June 1931 reprint will be used in this research, and includes the Foreword by J. Stuart Holden, dated 1 June 1914.

<sup>18</sup> After the CIM’s last issue of the *Occasional Papers* in March 1875, Taylor initiated and edited the new pictorial magazine *China’s Millions* (Broomhall 2005b:258). Benjamin Broomhall was involved in the editorial work of *China’s Millions* for 20 years, though the words ‘Edited by J. Hudson Taylor’ always appeared under the title [Cliff 1998]/2007:121). Benjamin Broomhall, his childhood friend, married Amelia (Taylor’s younger sister); their service together in the CIM’s London office was invaluable for the mission’s stability and expansion (Chang *et al.* 2005:74, 87, 102-103, 194; Broomhall 1918; Cliff [1998]/2007).

<sup>19</sup> For example, citing the Song’s lack of overt references to God, prayer, religion, or tradition, Davis poses an interesting question: ‘Is it the least “biblical” book in the Bible, or the most?’ She contends that it is ‘the most biblical of books’ since ‘the poet is throughout in conversation with other biblical writers’ (2000:231).

union and constant abiding (Taylor [1894]/1931:8), it is worth exploring its resonances with the Song of Songs' tradition (which is characterised mostly by mystical writings from the Roman Catholic monastic tradition). For this precise reason, interdisciplinary methodologies and interfaith conversation in the discipline of Spirituality are conducive to this study.

Finally, new lenses and academic critique are necessary to supplement popular missionary biography; the rationale is that Taylor's legacy has been largely eclipsed by a compelling 19th century China missionary story, as captured by the CIM's first official biographers (Taylor's second son Frederick Howard and daughter-in-law Geraldine nee Guinness). The foundational CIM publications include *The Story of the China Inland Mission* (Guinness [1892]/1977; [1894]/1977); and the two-volume original biography on Hudson Taylor, entitled *The Growth of a Soul* (Taylor & Taylor [1911]/2005) and *The Growth of a Work of God* ([1918]/2005). These were followed by *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*, a condensation of the original biography ([1932]/1958); and *The Biography of James Hudson Taylor*, a centennial abridgement of the original biography (1965). On the influence of the original biography, Pollock regards it as 'one of the world's decisive books' – 'a spiritual classic ... to be placed on the same shelf as *Pilgrim's Progress*' (1962:10-11; [1962]/1996:6-7). Meanwhile, Bacon asserts that the original biographers have given 'an enduring set of perspectives' and 'the model and challenge of Hudson Taylor's life'; and have 'probably ... contributed more to the influence and impact of Taylor on Christian missions than he himself did directly' (1984:130). In the British context, Stott was influenced by Taylor's faith during his undergraduate studies at Cambridge University in the 1940s (The Foreword, in Steer 1995:13-15); similarly, during Welby's university years, Taylor's biography was 'one of the most formative stories' in his Christian walk (The Foreword, in Broomhall 2018:9). Across the Atlantic, both the two-volume biography and the *Spiritual Secret* still find their place as either recommended or required reading in many North American Bible schools (Wiersbe 1976:62; Bacon 1984:137-38; Austin 2000:213). This research will not replicate the narrative of Taylor's life of faith; nor will it attempt to rewrite Taylor's 'spiritual secret'. Instead, it aims to provide fresh perspectives on Taylor's soul landscape/inner life through the lens of mystical spirituality.

### 1.1.3 *The significance of the research*

Taylor is rarely cited as 'a mystic' in contemporary sources, though his mystical traits are acknowledged (cf. Barr 1972; Reilly 1978; Pfister 2003; Wigram 2007; Piper 2016; Lam 2016). One possible reason stems from a general lack of understanding of the mystical dimension; hence the dearth of research on the mystical elements in Taylor's life and mission praxis, an

aspect that ‘has been neglected by most scholars, apart from the Jesuit, Reilly’ (Wigram 2007:244).<sup>20</sup> The new body of knowledge generated by this research will be valuable on several levels: as a talking point for the re-visioning of Taylor as an ‘ordinary mystic’ and a ‘practical mystic’ of the Protestant tradition (a 21st century perspective); a bridge between past and present through the recovery of impressions of Taylor as a mystic (from the late 19th and early 20th century); and an interdisciplinary study that would augment Taylor’s spiritual legacy.

First, re-visioning Taylor as a mystic in the 21st century is a worthy pursuit in light of recent missiological critique of the hagiographical and heroic portrayal of Taylor by the CIM biographers (Tucker 1983:173; Pollock [1992]/1996:7-8; Broomhall 2005a:xv; Austin 2019:121-123). To cite one example, Stanley questions the ‘aura of sanctity’ surrounding Taylor’s name; the portrayal of him as a symbol of ‘the perfect union’ of ‘mystic as well as missionary’; and his secured place in ‘evangelical hagiography’ (The Foreword, in Austin 2007:xiii–xiv). By implication, the early biographies are evidently imbued with cultural nuances and pious sentiments from the Victorian era that do not fully reflect Taylor’s spirituality, hence the need for critical distance, holistic approaches, and substantial correctives.

Second, the recognition of Taylor as a mystic is not novel or new; in fact, it recovers impressions of his close friends and relatives, and picks up the threads from late 19th to early 20th century works. W.A.P. Martin (1827-1916),<sup>21</sup> an American Presbyterian and respected sinologist,<sup>22</sup> is possibly the first to describe Taylor as a mystic, based on his personal assessment of Taylor’s growth, character, leadership, convictions, and contribution, as follows:

[Taylor], who rules as many men, and with a sway not less absolute, is the Loyola of Protestant missions. When I first met him he was a mystic absorbed in religious dreams, waiting to have his work revealed—not idle, but aimless. When he had money he spent it on charity to needy Chinese, and then was reduced to sore straits himself. When the vocation found him it made him a new man, with iron will and untiring energy. He erred in leading his followers to make war on ancestral worship, instead of seeking to reform it; still, in founding and conducting the China Inland Mission, he has made an epoch in the history of missionary enterprise ([1896]/1900:214).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Reilly’s section on Taylor’s spirituality (1978:102-110) will be reviewed in the next chapter (cf. 2.7.1).

<sup>21</sup> Martin read extensively on the work of the Jesuits in China during the Ming dynasty, and ‘liked to think of himself as a Protestant Matteo Ricci’ (Covell 1986:102). Ricci arrived in Macau in 1582; obtained permanent residence near Canton in 1583; reached Peking in 1601; and died in 1610, bringing an end to the first period of the Jesuit mission to China (Latourette [1929]/2009: 92-97).

<sup>22</sup> A photograph of the three China veterans Martin, Taylor and Griffith John (Chang *et al.* 2005:119) was taken on May 27, 1905, just days before Taylor’s death. At the missionary community gathering two days after his death, Martin recalled his dubbing of Taylor as ‘the Loyola of Protestant Missions in China’ – an indication of the mutual respect between two good friends, rather than a criticism of Taylor (Broomhall 2005b:747-748).

<sup>23</sup> In defense of Taylor, Broomhall (2005a:387) argues that he was not idle and aimless, but determined, pressing ‘inland’ for three years, while Martin, ‘the future Sinologue with imperial honors, pored over his books and taught his students in cloistered orderliness’.

Marshall Broomhall, one of the early CIM biographers, describes Taylor as ‘a true mystic of the church’, one who is able to ‘see and experience more vividly a Reality which there is for us all’ (Broomhall 1929:138). He associates this with Taylor’s writing on the Song of Songs (1929:186), which is underscored by Holden’s comment on his embodiment of union with Christ the Bridegroom, as follows: ‘[h]e lived as “married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead”’, which resulted in a life of fruitfulness (The Foreword, in Taylor [1894]/1931:6). In light of such impressions, this research weaves the threads from the past into a new tapestry for the present; and demonstrates that Taylor metaphorically exemplifies the marriage between ‘Loyola’<sup>24</sup> and ‘the bride’. Moreover, its particular mystical focus has the potential to diffuse ‘evangelical hagiography’ and to indirectly address ‘evangelical amnesia’<sup>25</sup> as far as the Christian mystical tradition is concerned.

Third, this research represents a contribution from the global south that would potentially augment Taylor’s spiritual legacy, based on its integration of academic knowledge, spiritual direction training and practice, ecumenical conversation, and cross-cultural experiential learning within the Chinese/Asian context. Taylor would serve as an interesting case study on topics such as the dialogue between mysticism and missiology (Karecki 2009:24-25); the integration of contemplation and mystical theology in mission spirituality (Laugerad 2008:117-137); the significance of spiritual direction<sup>26</sup> or spiritual companionship in mission (2008:117-137; Ma & Ross 2013:8); the role of diverse spiritual traditions and practices, interdisciplinary exchanges, and context-sensitive input (Ma & Ross 2013:8); etc.

#### 1.1.4 *Stating the research problem*

A distorted view of the missionary vocation is created when the mystical dimension is rejected, and the inner life neglected. One of the reasons that readers tend to reject the mystical and neglect to read *Union and Communion*, is that they consider ‘intimate fellowship with God’ to be impractical (Holden, in Taylor [1894]/1931:vi). The distortion is exacerbated by the neglect of soul care in mission ministry, which is partially attributed to the ‘subtle erroneous belief that

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<sup>24</sup> Though Ignatius of Loyola never fell under the spell of the Song of Songs, he was an ‘incorrigible romantic’ who taught that ‘love should manifest itself in deeds’ (Johnston 1995:251). This does not, however, negate the mystical nature and influence of Ignatius’ original apostolic aims, which McGinn clarifies regarding Catholic Reform in the sixteenth century (2016a:11).

<sup>25</sup> Mysticism in the Protestant tradition is a topic that is gaining interest to rediscover the mystical roots of the Reformation, and the influence of medieval writings from the Western Christian mystical tradition on Reformed writers of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries; notably, Schwanda (2012); McGinn (2016a); Rittgers & Evener (2019).

<sup>26</sup> Lam clarifies the traditional and alternative uses of the term ‘*spiritual direction*’ (2012:3), including a review of contemporary spiritual direction methodologies, with reference to the praxis of love, which underpins a poetics-praxis amalgam of the Song of Songs and Spiritual Direction (2012:27-47).

the great commission task of discipling the nations is equivalent to the great commandment of loving God' (Van Meter 2018:367-368). Stated differently, the over-emphasis on mission work (*doing*) at the expense of the inner life (*being*) poses a two-edged problem. On the one hand, Taylor the missionary is reduced to a mere 'activist' or 'pragmatist' when divine-human intimacy, the *dynamos* of his missional praxis, is undermined. On the other hand, the elevation of Taylor as a mystic through hagiography, heroism, and idealism deprives him of a fuller humanity and a warm-blooded sexuality, and renders him inaccessible to the ordinary person.

In light of the foregoing, my basic argument is that intimacy with God was a life-long psycho-spiritual development for Taylor that was intricately bound up with the pioneering challenges of the 19th century China missionary context and the formulation of the CIM's missiological innovations.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, a balanced treatment of him as both mystic and missionary pivots on an integrated understanding of his transformation in *holiness/wholeness* (Lam 2016:7). By extension, his mystical spirituality necessarily takes into consideration the in-breaking of God at critical junctures of life; the paradox between human weakness and divine power; the redemptive features born in adversity; his growth in humility, etc. In other words, toward a deepening consciousness of the presence of God in all of life through the process of human transformation and spiritual maturation. Taylor's mystical consciousness invariably shaped his missionary spirituality, as evident in the evolution of his faith principles, pioneering methodologies, and sacrificial model within the multifaceted complexities of historical-political factors, socio-economic conditions, etc.

The research problem is therefore stated as follows: *'The mystical spirituality of James Hudson Taylor has been overlooked in contemporary literature, yet it is vital for a holistic understanding of his inner life and the dynamos of his missionary praxis; this study will fill the gap with a multilayered exploration of Taylor's leitmotif of union and communion, and related transformative motifs, in order to demonstrate the value of his life and writings for soul care in contemporary Protestant missionary spirituality.'*

In keeping with the focus on Taylor's soul landscape, the following experiential questions will underpin the study: First, *'What are the particular literary and lived expressions*

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<sup>27</sup> The missiological distinctives of the CIM are delineated by Chang *et al.* (2005:42, citing Bacon 1984), as follows: (a) priority given to the unreached inland provinces, while seeking to evangelise the whole of China; (b) no solicitation of funds, and no indebtedness, but looking directly to God to supply needs great and small; (c) identification with the Chinese through dress, queue, diet, living conditions, etc., and worshipping in Chinese-style buildings; (d) training Chinese co-workers according to 'self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating' principles; (e) recruitment not based on educational or denominational background, but on spiritual qualifications; and the deployment of women in the interior provinces, also regarding them as Christian professionals; (f) inter-denominational and international membership; and (g) mission headquarters was located on the field, in China not in London, and under the leadership of the General Director.

of divine-human intimacy which may be considered characteristic of Taylor's mystical spirituality? Second, 'What were the defining moments and transformative experiences that precipitated Taylor's experiential union with Christ, and in what ways did it effect an integrative missionary spirituality?' Third, 'What are the key spiritual practices and virtues embodied by Taylor which would suggest that his missionary vocation is intrinsically a mystical path?' Presupposing that Taylor's life and writings were organically interlinked and embodied, the investigation is concerned not only with the 'what' (principles, paradigms, and prayer), but also with the 'how' (transformative processes and practices). Three crucial aspects will therefore be examined to address the research questions, as elaborated in the aims of the research (1.3 below), namely: *mystical text* (*Union and Communion*); *mystical encounter* (the *Exchanged Life*), and *mystical path* (a 73-year life journey, including a missionary vocation since the age of 21). The experiential findings and transformative paradigms will provide vital insights for *soul care*, with specific attention to its relevance for contemporary missionary spirituality. The rationale is that Taylor's wide vision for the evangelization of China was a noble cause, motivated by faith and love;<sup>28</sup> however, it was not without cost or contradiction, nor without flaws. Furthermore, though the CIM remained resolute in its purpose, its 'narrow theology', 'antiquated methods', and detriment to the health of its missionaries also received much criticism (Latourette [1929]/2009:384).

## 1.2 Definition of terms

Several definitions in this section provide a preliminary understanding of the terms 'spirituality', 'mystical spirituality', and 'missionary spirituality' and will be elaborated in the course of the research. They are broad in scope and are not limited to a particular tradition or denomination; moreover, their origin in Roman Catholic literature prior to their usage by Protestants is acknowledged – terms such as 'missions', 'spirituality' and 'mission spirituality'. Concerning '*missions*', Wigram (2007:24) notes that it was first introduced in connection with overseas ministries by the Jesuits, or the Society of Jesus, whose founder was Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556).<sup>29</sup> The term '*spirituality*' has been 'shorn of its specifically Catholic associations', according to McGrath, and 'has gradually come to replace the classical vocabulary of the Protestant tradition', namely words such as '*devotion, godliness, holiness, and piety*'

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<sup>28</sup> Taylor's motivation for mission may be summed up, as follows: 'Love to God and love to men [sic] filled the heart of the Founder of the Mission with a deep longing desire for the souls of the dying millions of China' (Broomhall 1936:v).

<sup>29</sup> Ironically though it was used in the context of the activities of the Counter Reformation and described 'the attempt to win back former Catholics to Rome ...' (Wigram 2007:24).

(1994:32). The concept '*mission spirituality*', notes Laugerad, 'first occurred in Roman Catholic literature in the second half of the 20th century, and spread to Protestant missiology in the 1970-ies' (2008:119).<sup>30</sup>

### 1.2.1 '*Spirituality*' as a broader term

The term '*spirituality*' has become something of a 'catch-phrase' and can be found in all sectors of society, according to Kourie (2015:1). Describing spirituality as a 'tapestry' which comprises many diverse strands (2015:1), she identifies it as 'the *raison d'être* of our existence, the meaning and values to which we ascribe' (2015:2). By implication, 'everyone embodies a spirituality in the wider sense of the term; it can be nihilistic, materialistic, humanistic, religious' (2015:2). In similar vein, Laugerad suggests that spirituality is not 'an exclusively Christian, or even religious, concept;' it is an 'open concept, inasmuch as there is no single common understanding determining its allusions' (2008:117). Nevertheless, he cites four common traits, as follows: it '*focuses on experience*'; '*aims at integrated life*'; '*(often) leads to self-transcendence*'; and '*concerns the deepest values of human life*' (2008:117).

In Christian terms, spirituality is not a vacuous escape from ordinary reality, nor a nebulous search for esoteric experiences; rather, it is an invitation to engage wholeheartedly in one's 'existential project' by being fully present to life. As Schneiders comments, spirituality is 'a conscious and deliberate way of living' and 'an ongoing project', not simply 'a spontaneous experience' (2011:16). She defines *spirituality* as 'the experience of conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence toward the horizon of ultimate value one perceives' (2011:16); and, in terms of Christian Spirituality, 'the horizon of ultimate value is the triune God revealed in Jesus Christ ...' (2011:17). Christian spirituality therefore involves intentional 'inner work' and conscious reflection on personal experience, as we seek to live in union and communion with the Triune God within our multifaceted reality.

The Bible is essential in defining Christian spirituality because the biblical foundation is 'a wellspring for believers, a deep reservoir of images and ways of knowing God' (Bowe 2003:13). With particular connotations to the apostle Paul's usage, Sheldrake elucidates the Latin root *spiritualitas*; the Greek noun for spirit, which is *pneuma*, and its adjective *pneumatikos* which appears in the Pauline letters ([1991]/1995:42). He suggests that Paul's

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<sup>30</sup> The principal document of the Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, states that 'the church is by nature a missionary church'; Bühlmann elaborates that since the publication of this document, 'missionary spirituality entered practically all the other documents', and promulgated the idea that 'all theology is to be missionary-minded' (2010:113-114).

reference to ‘spiritual’ is holistic, not dualistic, and thus a ‘spiritual person’ is ‘*not* someone who turns away from reality but rather someone in whom the Spirit of God dwells’ ([1991]/1995:42-43). Bosch, also on Paul’s spirituality, associates the term ‘spiritual’ with Paul’s leitmotif of being ‘in Christ’, as follows: ‘Being spiritual means being in Christ, whether we pray or walk or work’ (1979:13).

The human and holistic aspects are essential in Chinese spirituality and are accentuated in Tam’s elucidation that the ‘ancient meanings of the word “spirit” indicate a strong bodily locus – the lungs’ (2008:138). His definition is derived from the Latin word, *spiritus*, meaning ‘breath’; the Greek translation, *pneuma*, meaning ‘lungs, breath, breathing’; and the Hebrew word, *ruah*, also meaning ‘breath’ (2008:138). Tam affirms that ‘human beings are intrinsically spiritual’, and that ‘a “spirited” life is actualized in the here and now in everyday activities and experiences’ (2008:138). Honing in on the ‘spiritual ability’ or ‘spiritual quality’ of human beings (2008:138-139), he defines Christian spirituality as ‘consciously striving to embody the intrinsic spiritual qualities of being human in everyday life, by following the way of Jesus’ (2008:145).<sup>31</sup> The ordinary realities of life are also emphasised in Chan & Hunter’s definition, namely ‘the inner pilgrimage which a Christian takes on earth, a pilgrimage of faith where Christians experience a living God within their concrete reality’ (1991:12-13).<sup>32</sup>

McGrath states, in the context of spirituality, that the word ‘spiritual’ refers to ‘*life in the world oriented toward God*’ (1994:33), and a central aspect of its spirituality is ‘the total integration of faith and everyday life’ (1994:33). Based on 1 Cor 2:12-14, he asserts that spirituality is concerned with ‘the shaping, empowering, and maturing of the “spiritual person” (*pneumatikos anthropos*)’ ... that is, the person who is alive to and responsive to God in the world, as opposed to the person who merely exists within and responds to the world’ (1994:33). Four distinguishing features of Reformation spirituality (1994:42-57) include the following: it is ‘*grounded and nourished in the study of Scripture*’; it ‘*insists that the quest for human identity, authenticity, and fulfilment cannot be undertaken in isolation from God*’; it ‘*explicitly recognizes the priesthood and vocation of all Christian believers*’; and it is ‘*grounded in and oriented toward life in the everyday world*’.

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<sup>31</sup> Tam cites four intrinsic elements of spirituality which are interconnected and form a coherent whole, are delineated as: ‘life-giving behaviours, compassionate affection, meaning seeking, and numinous experience’ (2008:140).

<sup>32</sup> The spiritual pilgrimage of Christians in China has several distinctive characteristics, namely: ‘perseverance in suffering, moral conduct, Christocentric devotion, nationalism, cultural continuity and evangelism’, and more recently includes socio-political engagement (Chan & Hunter 1991:13-15).

### 1.2.2 *'Mystical spirituality' as an intimate-transformative term*

The mystical dimension is usually treated as a particular aspect within the wider scope of spirituality, following Kourie's point that 'spirituality is a broader term than mysticism, although closely related' (1981:72); and Schwanda's that '[m]any expressions of spirituality do not reflect the depth of intimacy suggested by mysticism' (2012:6). For present purposes then, *'mystical spirituality'* is an apt integrative term that accentuates the depth dimension of divine-human intimacy while encompassing the broader aspects of lived spirituality.

By way of clarification, the adjective *'mystical'* is preferred, rather than the more fully developed formulation of the term *'mysticism'* which is fraught with misconceptions.<sup>33</sup> 'Mystical', meaning 'hidden' in Greek (McGinn 2006:xiv), was used by Christians as early as the second century CE, to refer to 'the secret realities of their beliefs, rituals, and practices, especially to the "mystical meaning" of the Bible' (2006:xiv). Thus, a mystical lens to reading Scripture refers to 'the inner message about attaining God that may be found beneath the literal sense of the scriptural texts and stories' (2006:xiv); while *'mystical contemplation'* and *'mystical theology'* are terms related to 'the knowledge of God gained not by human rational effort but by the soul's direct reception of a divine gift' (2006:xiv).

McGinn's emphasis on the 'mystical element in Christianity'<sup>34</sup> is also helpful, which broadly understood is 'the aspect of religious life that seeks a deep and transformative sense of the direct presence of God' (2016a:3). Elsewhere he defines it as 'that part of its belief and practices that concerns the preparation for, the consciousness of, and the reaction to what can be described as the immediate or direct presence of God' (1995:xvii); in other words, the focus is on the part in interaction with the whole process of transformation, and is not limited to a particular 'mystical experience' (1995:xvii), nor to union as 'the goal of the mystical life' (2006:xv). Moreover, the notion of *presence* 'provides a more inclusive and supple term than *union*'; and, instead of *experience*, McGinn prefers the word *'consciousness'* (2006:xv-xvi), which does not treat God simplistically as 'an object to be grasped, but as the direct and transforming centre of life', which leads to 'new ways of knowing and loving based on states of awareness in which God becomes present in our inner acts' (2006:xvi).

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<sup>33</sup> Cognisance is taken of McGinn's point (2006:xiv) that the original reference to the mystical was its adjectival form. The word *'mysticism'* was created in the 17th century and only became popular in the 19th century. McGinn further clarifies that mystics 'practise Christianity'; they do not believe in or practise 'mysticism' (1995:xvi). The varieties, complexities, nuances, and prejudices surrounding the word 'mysticism' are admirably addressed by contemporary scholars and beyond the present scope. Kourie's writings, as one example, are especially helpful on the academic, experiential, mystical, scriptural and interfaith aspects of spirituality and mysticism, with an overarching emphasis on human transformation (1981, 1998, 2012, 2015).

<sup>34</sup> McGinn states that the 'mystical element' is one of three important elements of religion, while the other two refer to the intellectual and the institutional (1995:xvi, citing von Hugel).

Where *'mysticism'* is used in the current research, it refers to ... a *'way of life*, in which the purifying, illuminating and transforming power of God is experienced, effecting a transmutation of the mystic's entire being and consciousness' (Kourie 1981:72). On this basis, mystical spirituality falls into the category of 'Christian mysticism' or 'Christ-mysticism' which Kourie associates with Paul's mysticism and his leitmotif of 'in Christ' (1981).

Regarding *'mystical union'*, it will be used in the biblical sense, as evident in Paul's spirituality. For example, Sheldrake, citing 1 Cor 6:17, states that the Spirit is one with Christ who effects union with Christ; therefore 'to be united to Christ is to enter into the sphere of the Spirit' ([1991]/1995:42-43). Karecki cites Col. 1:15 and Eph. 1:10, suggesting that spirituality 'develops the interior life and taps the deepest sources of desire, revealing our mystical longing for unity with Christ and all of creation' (2012:24). This 'union with the Lord', she reiterates, 'is an invitation open to all ... a universal call to holiness' (2012:25). Mystical union is also an important characteristic of Chinese spirituality and Chinese devotional literature, according to Chan & Hunter (1991:13); it refers to a particular longing of Chinese believers in times of hardship, as the sense of personal identification with Christ gives them 'the strength to endure the many trials and sufferings imposed on them' (1991:13-14).

Though mysticism is broader than the aspect of mystical union, it is worth noting several definitions which emphasise union, as follows: mysticism is 'the art of union with Reality' (Underhill [1915]/2000:5); '*consciousness of union with the Divine, or the Ground of Being, or Ultimate Reality*' (Kourie 1981:71); and, 'we are made for union with God' because it is 'God's desire to be in loving union with each person in the depth of his/her being' (Karecki 2009:25). Christian mysticism then is 'not an escape from reality, but an encounter with reality at its deepest level' (2009:26). Similarly, union with God is a relational term and a participation in the divine nature, which maintains a distinction between Creator and creature; in Christian terms, it is not an absorption into the divine through loss of personal identity.

### 1.2.3 *'Missionary spirituality' as an incarnational-transformative term*

The term *'missionary spirituality'* is still in use 'particularly amongst mission historians who describe the spirituality of historical missionaries' (Chevalier 2017:327); hence it is apt for the present research on Taylor's spirituality. Other terms such as *'mission spirituality'* or *'missional spirituality'* are in vogue, and encompass the multifaceted dimensions of missiology, theology, cross-cultural perspectives, historical considerations, inter-religious dialogue, global trends, etc. In contemporary scholarship on *Missio Dei*, the mystical dimension evidently pervades missionary spirituality with intimacy, incarnation,

transformation, and openness. To summarise, mission is first and foremost the mission of God (Bosch [1991]/2011; Karecki 2009, 2012; Laugerad 2008; Reilly 1978); thus, the missionary is invited first to intimacy with the Triune God. Consequently, this intimacy leads to participation in God's agenda and movement into all the world; and into communion, not isolation (Karecki 2012:25). This capacity for communion that is given by the Spirit, is also for the purification of the missionary's inner self (Eph 3:16); and the same love 'that ignites passion and zeal for participation in God's mission' also transforms the missionary (2012:25). With reference to the apostle Paul, Bosch (1979:13-25) notes that missionary life was an ongoing transformation through his engagement in the world, which is discernible in the intensely personal nature of second Corinthians. In sum, *missionary spirituality*<sup>35</sup> will refer in this research to personal spirituality that is incarnated in a way of life that engages God's mission in the world, which includes the missionary's ongoing transformation through intimacy with the Triune God.

Several definitions on being a mystic are offered at this point, which render the term 'mystic' applicable in Protestant missionary spirituality; in other words, references to an 'ordinary mystic' and a 'practical mystic' are valid for the 'priesthood of all believers'. Underhill's description of a mystic (closely associated with the sensitivities of a poet) is one who 'has achieved a passionate communion with deeper levels of life than those with which we usually deal' ([1915]/2000:5). This capacity, she clarifies, 'is not limited to an elite group'; rather, the 'contemplative consciousness' involves 'a faculty which is proper to all men [sic], though few take the trouble to develop it' ([1915]/2000:5). The potentiality of all people to become mystics is underscored by Rahner's view that 'grace is primarily God's universal *self-communication*' and is addressed to '*all human beings*'; because God offers 'God's very own self to everyone, the human person is ... *homo mysticus*, mystical man [sic]' (Egan 2010:43). An awakening to or an experience of God as a response to grace provides a helpful rationale for Rahner's well known maxim: 'The devout Christian of the future will either be a "mystic", one who has experienced "something", or he will cease to be anything at all' (Egan 2010:51). The mystic is evidently 'not some strange creature with remarkable human powers, but an ordinary person intent on opening him/herself to God's transformative love', asserts Karecki (2009:27). Based on her integration of mission and mysticism, this transforming love makes a person 'sympathetic to the plight of people everywhere in the world'; thus, for the mystic, there

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<sup>35</sup> Further insights on Paul's missionary spirituality will be developed in Chapter 5 for an understanding of Taylor's missionary spirituality.

are ‘no borders or boundaries that cannot be crossed for the sake of the Gospel’ (2009:27) – an emphasis that is especially pertinent in Taylor's case.

### 1.3 Aim of the research

The overarching aim of this research is to recover Taylor’s mystical wisdom on union and communion with God by reframing it with new perspectives and holistic paradigms that would enrich the inner life of contemporary readers (an individual level), and raise awareness of ‘*soul care*’ – or *care of soul* – in Protestant missionary spirituality (the communal level). Three crucial aspects extrapolated from Taylor’s life and writings will be examined to achieve this aim, namely: ‘*mystical text*’, ‘*mystical encounter*’, and ‘*mystical path*’. As a composite, these three aspects present a unique multilayered and integrative approach to Taylor's soul landscape.

#### 1.3.1 *Union and Communion as mystical text*

First, a proposed mystical lens will enable readers to engage *Union and Communion* as a *mystical text* based on key resonances between Taylor’s mystical expressions and the Song of Songs tradition, and the significance of union and communion in the Western Christian mystical tradition. Since Taylor penned his reflections on the Song of Songs in the latter part of his life, a mystical reading attends to contemplative ways of communing at the mid-life stage and beyond. Moreover, this study focuses on experiential insights and contemporary paradigms, and would therefore serve as a companion resource to Taylor's valuable yet neglected commentary. By way of interest, *Union and Communion* has been translated into Chinese, entitled 在香草山上：讀雅歌的心得 ([1894]/1968); but it is not well publicised.

#### 1.3.2 *The Exchanged Life as mystical transformation*

Second, *Union and Communion* lacks autobiographical detail, personal experiences, and historical references; therefore, this study is helpful in understanding how Taylor's mystical text was shaped by his personal transformation. Termed the ‘*Exchanged Life*’ in the two-volume biography and dated September 4, 1869 (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:155-214), this transformative encounter, at the age of 37, in Zhenjiang, effected a oneness with Christ, which Taylor describes through the metaphor of the vine and the branches (John 15). The experiential link between mystical text and missionary context, and the Song of Songs and John 15, is therefore essential to Taylor's understanding of *union with Christ* and *abiding in Christ*, which featured prominently in his second half of life. Moreover, the Exchanged Life was wrought from personal existential crises, intense suffering, and complex external socio-political-

economic conditions. The study therefore clarifies that his mystical transformation was not an ego-centred and self-absorbed state; on the contrary, it resulted in a heightened consciousness of God's presence in all of life; an increased joy, zest and generosity in service; expansive vision for China; peace and rest in the face of suffering, adversity, persecution, etc.

### 1.3.3 *The missionary vocation as mystical path*

Third, as discerned from the corpus of Taylor's personal correspondence and biblical expositions, God's presence was the keynote of his spirituality, from his conversion and call to China (at the age of 17, in Barnsley) till his death (at the age of 73, in Changsha, Hunan). A framing of his 56-year missionary vocation as a mystical path (or a *way* of union and communion) will therefore include key spiritual practices, which denote the mystical characteristics of his missionary spirituality. Integral to Taylor's intimacy with God was the embodiment of love mysticism within marital, family, mission relationships, friendships, etc.; hence the significance of his first wife, Maria née Dyer (1837-1870), and his second wife, Jennie née Faulding (1843-1904), who were not only Taylor's soul companions, but pioneer missionaries in their own right. This whole person approach is therefore helpful, as it integrates spirituality and sexuality, and exudes a 'full bodied', warm-blooded passionate man, with feet of clay. Furthermore, the focus on his humanity through suffering and trials, the cost to his health and family, etc. would resonate with the 'ordinary saint'; thus the proposed mystical path, combined with practical application, would be applicable to the 'priesthood of all believers' (Lam 2016:7).

## 1.4 Demarcating the area of research

The proposed in-depth study is essentially a microscopic view of Taylor's spirituality rather than a panoramic view of his spiritual legacy; therefore, the research will hone in on two areas, namely: *mystical spirituality* (the primary level) and *missionary spirituality* (the secondary level). These two areas interface, as evident in the seamless interweaving of key biblical motifs in Taylor's writings, such as the Great Commandment and the Great Commission, the Song of Songs and John 15 (the True Vine), etc. However, they are demarcated for the sake of emphasis, where *mystical spirituality* refers to an 'intimate-transformative' term, and 'missionary spirituality' to an 'incarnational-transformative' term (as indicated in 1.2.2 above).

The microscopic focus will be employed to both the primary and the secondary level, based on the following four considerations, namely: *poetics*, *prosaic*, *process*, and *praxis*. First,

the mystical focus in *Union and Communion* is based on *poetics*<sup>36</sup> and mystical resonances with the Song of Songs' tradition. It is not an exegetical comparison with the Song of Songs; nor will it engage the traditional arguments and theological debates surrounding the various interpretations of the Song.<sup>37</sup> Second, the *prosaic* conditions which illuminate Taylor's mystical text and shaped his teaching on deepening union and constant abiding are furnished by the *Exchanged Life*. Only this particular transformative encounter will be examined in detail to connect his text and life context, as the kaleidoscope of intriguing spiritual encounters and fascinating missionary adventures are too numerous for this study. Third, in terms of '*process*', the key mystical characteristics of Taylor's missionary vocation, and key corresponding spiritual practices, will be identified to chart his mystical path as a way of union and communion with God. The process will not include the detailed narrative and chronology of Taylor's life, the stages of the CIM's development, the transition into OMF and its expansion of ministries in East Asia, etc.<sup>38</sup> Fourth, on *praxis*, the study will hone in on '*soul care*' as a rubric for Taylor's missionary spirituality, since mystical union with Christ became incarnated as a way of life, which empowered him to speak from his inner depths even in his public ministry. Praxis will therefore not focus on the CIM's methodologies (evangelistic strategies, financial principles, diverse ministries, contextualisation policies, etc.)

By way of clarification, topics with regard to the macro scale (mainly historical and missiological) are admirably researched by contemporary scholars and will not be examined in this research. These include, among many others: the CIM's role in Chinese church history (Latourette [1929]/2009, 1944; Charbonnier 2007; Tiedermann 2010:133-192); its influence on 'faith missions' (Bacon 1984; Fiedler 1994); the ramifications of Western imperialism in China and 'the unholy alliance between the Gospel and the gunboat' (Kane 1994:199-200); the ambivalent role of the 19th century Protestant missionary and the mixed messages symbolised by 'the conqueror' and 'the cross' (Tucker 2011:418-421); the CIM's anti-opium campaign and the pros and cons of its opium refuges (Austin 2007:199-203; 365-394); the debates on ancestral worship, notably Taylor's opposition at the missionary conference in Shanghai in 1890 (Doyle 2012a; 2012b). Suffice it to mention that Taylor did not intend to build a

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<sup>36</sup> *Poetics*, or a 'poetic orientation', is used in a generic way to distinguish the levels of poetics and praxis; it is effective for exploring the Song of Songs through non-exegetical approaches (Lam 2012:6). Hampton states that the development of Christian mysticism is bound to poetics and elucidates 'how poetics allows the mystical writer to achieve a result for the reader otherwise not possible in discursive forms of communication' (2020).

<sup>37</sup> Ricoeur refers to the traditional debates and dichotomous views between the literal and allegorical, sexual and spiritual, as 'the arguments of the older quarrel' (1998:303). His hermeneutical insights focus on a reading (not the writing) of the text; and are conducive to a transformative approach to the Song (Lam 2012:22-24, 48-49, 70-71, 77, 141-142).

<sup>38</sup> Recommended sources (cf. Lyall [1965]/1976; and Chang *et al.* 2005) are discussed in the Literature Review.

monumental organisation, nor was he in competition with other denominational/mission societies; on the contrary, he promoted co-operation and was respected for his 'catholicity' and evangelistic vision for the whole world (Broomhall 1905).

## **1.5 Methodology**

### *1.5.1 Theory (Literature research)*

The literature research will be limited to works in English; and, as far as possible, will draw on primary sources for an in-depth investigation of Taylor's own writings (including personal correspondence, journals, devotional extracts, and public addresses). The mosaic of CIM literature will be foundational sources for extracting data with regard to narrative material, historical context, significant people and events, etc., especially in relation to *Union and Communion*, the *Exchanged Life*, and Taylor's *missionary vocation*. Contemporary academic works will inform the study, particularly on theological topics; for example, Taylor's early formation was influenced by the Wesleyan, Methodist, and Brethren traditions; and, in later life, the Holiness and Keswick Movements (Wigram 2007). These are located within the influences of the 19th century English (Victorian) socio-religious context, the prevalent Victorian cultural worldview, and the impetus of the Romantic spirit on British Protestant missions (Wigram 2007). On mystical spirituality and missionary spirituality, a broad range of scholarship will be consulted in order to obtain a cross-pollination of insights, which would foster ecumenical understanding and inter-cultural dialogue. Notable authors on spirituality and mysticism will include, among others, the following: Egan (2010); Karecki (2009, 2012, 2014); Kourie (1981, 1998, 2009a, 2009b, 2015); McGinn (1995, 1996, 1999, 2006, 2012a, 2012b, 2016a, 2016b, 2017, 2018, 2020); Perrin (2007); Schneiders (1999, 2005, 2005a, 2011); Sheldrake ([1991]/1995); Tyler (2010, 2011, 2016); Waaijman (2002); Yungblut (1997).

Though the study is theoretical, the multifaceted dimensions of Taylor's spirituality will be interwoven for a practical understanding of soul care in contemporary missionary spirituality. This is necessary since Taylor's writings exemplify an interfacing of the biblical and personal, mystical and missional, spiritual and sexual, East and West mission context, etc. Holistic and heuristic paradigms to be employed will therefore be informed by a wide spectrum of interdisciplinary psycho-spiritual skills, spiritual direction input, contemplative practices, and Chinese contextual insights, as follows: Chow (2013); Hughes (2008); Liu (1986); May ([1982]/1992, 1988, 2004); Ruffing (2000); Tam (2008); Welch (1982; 1990); Yeo (1998); among others.

### 1.5.2 Method: Hermeneutical approach and overall structure of the project

The overall structure of the research will not adopt a narrative approach or chronological account of Taylor's life. In keeping with the microscopic focus, the research methodology most conducive to this research is Schneiders' 3-phase hermeneutical approach (2005:5-24).<sup>39</sup> It allows for incremental depth from the inside out; and, for present purposes, the movement from text, to life context, and to a life-long vocation. Using the metaphor of a lotus flower, the inside-out approach begins at the core with attention to its detail and particularity. The next step is downward and deeper to its roots which are submerged in mud and water, noticing the entanglement with other roots and plants. The third step is the wider landscape of the lotus pond, focusing on its development and interconnection with the forces of nature. In each of the three phases, wise methods of cultivation and preservation are identified in order to maintain its unique beauty within the cosmos.

The 3-phase approach is summarised here (and detailed in 1.6 below). First, the *existential-descriptive phase* focuses on the *poetics* of *Union and Communion*, as reflected in Taylor's description of the Song as 'a poem describing the life of the believer on earth' ([1894]/1931:107). Furthermore, he asserts that the 'practical use' of the Song is to 'deepen' the union with Christ the Bridegroom and 'to make more constant this abiding' ([1894]/1931:8), which denotes an existential premise that mystical union becomes an intimate reality and a way of life on the earth. Second, the *contextual-analytical phase* ventures deeper into the *prosaic* conditions which shaped the writing of *Union and Communion*, for an analysis of the relationship between text and mission life context (the *Exchanged Life*, Zhenjiang, 1869). Since Taylor's mystical transformation is captured in experiential discoveries of John 4, 6, 7, and 15, vital themes of deepening union and constant abiding will be analysed. For example, he accentuates *being* and *abiding* as prerequisites for *doing*: 'Let us never forget that what we *are* is more important than what we *do*, and that all fruit borne when not abiding in Christ must be fruit of the flesh and not of the Spirit' ([1894]/1931:32, italics mine). Third, the *creative-constructive phase* offers a wider purview of the leitmotif of union and communion, with a focus on *process* and *praxis* in Taylor's missionary journey. Since his view of the Song of Songs is that the 'whole song is progressive' ([1894]/1931:94), a heuristic paradigm is constructed to illustrate the journey motif as both progressive and transformative. Moreover, it

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<sup>39</sup> Schneiders' (2005) 3-phase hermeneutical approach was adapted to a 4-phase hermeneutical approach and successfully employed to investigate the Song of Songs as a biblical paradigm for the practice of spiritual direction (Lam 2012).

demonstrates that Taylor's missionary vocation was intrinsically a mystical path, based on Taylor's spiritual practices as applied to a 19th century China mission context.

### 1.5.3 Methodological principles

Three methodological principles will be employed in the three phases, namely: the mystical-experiential, human transformation, and the journey motif. First, on the mystical text, the '*mystical-experiential*' principle is apt, based on Taylor's supposition that the deep truths of the Song of Songs are learned by 'grace' and through 'experience' ([1894]/1931:19). The congruence between text and lived experience is also given due attention, as it lends credence to the authenticity of personal spirituality. In this regard, Holden affirms Taylor's credibility, as follows: 'For what he here expounds he also exemplified'; and 'What he *was* has given a meaning and confirmation to what he has here *said* ...' (in the Foreword, [1894]/1931:v-vi).

The second principle is '*transformation*' of the human subject, or '*mystical transformation*', which is a core principle in the study of spirituality, and therefore applied to the Exchanged Life experience. Following McGinn, 'the only test that Christianity has known for determining the authenticity of a mystic and her or his message has been that of personal transformation, both on the mystic's part and – especially – on the part of those whom the mystic has affected' (2006:xvii). On *mystical transformation*, Kourie clarifies that it 'leads us beyond limited and one-dimensional forms of consciousness, resulting in an enhanced attentiveness to reality and a new theocentric perception, the psychotherapeutic value of which can be seen in an increased zest for life and selfless service of others' (2012:1).

Third, the '*mystical path*' is applicable to Taylor's missionary vocation, as personal transformation is long-range. With reference to Paul's missionary spirituality, the journey motif suggests a progressive movement: 'Never fixed and finished, it is a spirituality that journeys from stage to stage' (Bosch 1979:20). From the practice of spiritual direction, deepening union with God is a spiritual journey and a process, but is not one of continual progress: 'It has fits and starts ... backtracking and advances' (Addison 2000:48).<sup>40</sup>

## 1.6 Delineation of chapters

The primary purpose of **Chapter 2**, the Literature Review, is to obtain a wide spectrum of perspectives from secondary sources on Taylor's intimacy with God. Where applicable, the

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<sup>40</sup> Addison states that at the heart of spiritual guidance, is 'prayer, in its many forms' (2000:44); and 'the ultimate aim of the interaction is always to help the seeker gain closer union with God' (2000:41).

three aspects pertaining to his mystical spirituality will be highlighted in order to lay a foundation for a microscopic approach in the research. The secondary purpose of the review is to locate this research within the existing body of literature, by identifying the lacunae to be addressed, substantiating the methodological approach to be employed, and clarifying the rationale for interfacing Taylor's mystical and missionary spirituality.

**Chapter 3:** the *existential-descriptive phase* remains within the framework of the Song of Songs and describes *Union and Communion* as 'an expression of soul love'. Mystical resonances with the Song of Songs' tradition are identified for the proposed *mystical lens*. Taylor's overall structure to the Song of Songs begins with 'the unsatisfied life and its remedy' (Section I), and ends with 'unrestrained communion' (Section VI); on this basis an eight-fold multi-layered paradigm elucidates the transformative process '*from unrest to soul rest*'.

**Chapter 4:** the *contextual-analytical phase* analyses the Exchanged Life as 'an experience of soul rest'. With reference to Taylor's readings in John's Gospel, this pivotal moment and existential crisis at mid-life is treated as *mystical transformation*. Moreover, the eight-fold paradigm from Chapter 3 connects the experiential link with this chapter, and is applied to trace the transformative process '*from holy striving to wholly abiding*'.

**Chapter 5:** the *creative-constructive phase* charts Taylor's missionary vocation as a mystical path based on four mystical characteristics and four corresponding spiritual practices, which encapsulate his '*embodiment of soul work*'. A heuristic paradigm is constructed to chart the mystical path, as follows: first, faith (*askesis*); second, hope (*kenosis*); third, love (*theosis*); and fourth, grace (*epektasis*). Citing Paul's mystical motifs and missionary spirituality, the transformative process '*from living sacrifice to loving sacrament*' demonstrates a way of deepening union and constant abiding, including an awareness of the *mysterium tremendum*.

**Chapter 6:** based on the foregoing chapters, the *Conclusion* gathers the threads of the multi-layered investigation into Taylor's mystical spirituality, and draws conclusions on the contemporary relevance of his life and writings; in particular, the three aspects of soul love (as expressed in *Union and Communion*, and the Song of Songs); soul rest (as experienced in the *Exchanged Life* and John's Gospel); and soul work (as embodied in the paradoxes of Paul's missionary spirituality). The findings of the paradigms, especially the transformative motifs, offer a rubric for *soul care* that is applicable to contemporary missionary spirituality. Finally, the Conclusion will delineate areas of interest not included in the present study and offer suggestions for further research. For example, in terms of specific application in contemporary Chinese/Asian contexts, studies in cultural symbolism, linguistic reframing, and aesthetic appreciation would be required.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

The primary purpose of the Literature Review is to offer a panoramic view of secondary sources on Taylor, in order to establish a foundation for the exploration of his '*mystical spirituality*' in this research. The secondary purpose is to identify the lacunae to be addressed and to substantiate the methodological approach to be employed; and thereby locate this study within the wealth of literature on Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission.

To reiterate, the three aspects under consideration include Taylor's mystical text (*Union and Communion*), his mystical transformation (*The Exchanged Life*), and the mystical characteristics of his missionary vocation (*mystical path*). Though the key sources and their respective approaches to these three aspects will be highlighted, important details will be reserved for the three core chapters, which will be based as far as possible on primary source material. Although the review is extensive, it is in no way exhaustive. Six categories will be employed to cover a wide spectrum of perspectives, as follows: *biographical; historical; devotional; missiological; Chinese; and spirituality*. To reiterate, these are not neat categories, as overlap invariably occurs; they are employed mainly for the sake of emphasis.

Since primary sources are outside the scope of this review, it is worth noting that original material by Taylor and the CIM is housed in the Special Archives of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, and is available for research purposes by permission of SOAS and OMF UK. The collection includes the 'Taylor papers' (personal correspondence and journals); CIM documents, minutes, reports, pamphlets for spiritual edification and missions information, etc. SOAS also holds a full set of the CIM's *Occasional Papers* published from 1866, and *China's Millions*, which replaced them in 1875. Sections of the Hudson Taylor Papers and *China's Millions* are also stored on microfiche at the Special Archives of the Baptist University Library, Hong Kong; the Archives of Wheaton College, Illinois; and the China Resources of Yale's Divinity School Library.

#### 2.2 Biographical works (1911-1990)

This category is by far the most prolific and popular; however, only four or five authors' works will be reviewed, spanning approximately eight decades of the 20th century. These biographies are deemed the most reliable for the present exploration of Taylor's mystical spirituality.

2.2.1 *The Growth of a Soul* (Taylor & Taylor ([1911]/2005); *The Growth of a Work of God* ([1918]/2005); *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret* ([1932]/1958); *Faith's Venture* ([1932]/1960); and *Biography of James Hudson Taylor* ([1965]/1978)

The first official CIM biographers, Taylor's second son, Frederick Howard Taylor (1862-1946), and his wife Mary Geraldine Guinness (1862-1949), co-authored several works which became foundational to Taylor's enduring legacy. Commonly referred to in the CIM literature as 'Dr and Mrs Howard Taylor', or simply as 'Howard' and 'Geraldine',<sup>41</sup> they fall into the category of second-generation CIM missionaries (Chang *et al.* 2005:93).<sup>42</sup> They co-authored the two-volume biography, which will be referred to as the '*original biography*' throughout the research. Volume 1, *The Growth of a Soul*, is subtitled, 'Hudson Taylor in Early Years' ([1911]/2005); and Volume 2, *The Growth of a Work of God*, is subtitled, 'Hudson Taylor and the China Inland Mission' ([1918]/2005). These two volumes will serve as the main biographical source given the plethora of original extracts from Taylor's personal correspondence, including pertinent information on the Song of Songs and the Exchanged Life.

By way of background and clarification, three condensations encapsulate the essentials of the original biography. First, the popular *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*;<sup>43</sup> and, second, an even shorter biography, entitled: *Faith's Venture: A Shorter life of Hudson Taylor*. The former captures the secret of Taylor's life in nuce as 'the secret of power and blessing in living union with the Lord Jesus Christ'; the spiritual experiences recorded are based not on emotional or illusory notions, but on tried and tested principles, which the authors claim can stand the acid test of time ([1932]/1958:130). Noteworthy also is The Chronological Outline which records the date '1869, September 4', as follows: 'Entered into The Exchanged Life: – "God has made me a new man!"' ([1932]/1958:168). Third, the one volume *Biography of James Hudson Taylor*, published in the CIM's centennial year (1965),<sup>44</sup> is more substantial and

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<sup>41</sup> For details of Geraldine's life and prolific writings, cf. *Mrs Howard Taylor: Her Web of Time* (Guinness [1949]/1950). Bacon's brief section highlights Geraldine's literary contribution to the CIM (1984:130-132); while Austin (2019) critiques her literary influence on evangelical history and evangelical identity.

<sup>42</sup> Howard joined the CIM in 1890 and was a medical missionary in Henan (Chang *et al.* 2005:97). He was converted as a child; had a close relationship with his father; and accompanied him frequently on travels in China and internationally (Broomhall 2005a:829; 2005b:511, 539). Geraldine's call to China in 1883 was influenced by Hudson Taylor's visit to the Guinness' home (2005b:414); she was gifted in writing; arrived in China in 1888; and married Howard in 1894 (Chang *et al.* 2005:95).

<sup>43</sup> The Chinese translation of *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*, entitled 屬靈的秘訣：戴德生信心之旅 ([1955]/1995), is based on Lewis' revision (1955), not on the quaint Victorian style of the original 1932 publication. The second edition of the Chinese translation is dated October 1997, and the third, July 2017.

<sup>44</sup> This abridged biography also carries the following title: *J. Hudson Taylor: a Biography God's Man in China* ([1965]/1978).

reliable than the *Spiritual Secret* in terms of detail and context; and will be referred to as the ‘*abridged biography*’ in this research. Authorship is attributed to ‘Dr and Mrs Howard Taylor’; however, it was edited by OMF-UK author Phyllis Thompson, who retained the sensibilities of the original biographers (Glasser, The Foreword, in Taylor & Taylor [1965]/1978:vii-viii). The drawback of the *Spiritual Secret* is that without sufficient historical data, the narratives seem like ‘a dream world, where ... Taylor moves through a featureless landscape populated by nameless people’ (Austin 2019:126). Further critique of the original biographers’ content, style, and bias will be delineated in the course of this chapter.<sup>45</sup>

The original biography warrants specific attention, as it will serve as the main biographical source. *The Growth of a Soul*<sup>46</sup> is ‘a faithful story of the growth of a soul in the knowledge and love of God’, which is based on Taylor’s ‘own letters and recollections’, most of which were carefully preserved by his mother (Taylor & Taylor [1911]/2005:3, 5). This portrayal of Taylor the missionary illustrates that God’s way of raising up a person ‘for special service’ is first the inner work, or the ‘inworking of divine grace’; in other words, God first works in that person the principles that later become ‘the means of widespread blessing to the church and to the world’ ([1911]/2005:9). According to Dixon Hoste, Taylor’s successor appointed in 1903, this work represents a true reflection of the person and character of Taylor:

It is perhaps the highest tribute to the character of Mr. Hudson Taylor that it is the recollection of what he was, almost more than what he accomplished, which is more treasured by those who were privileged to know and work with him. He possessed qualities both of heart and mind not often found highly developed in the same individual (The Introduction, in Taylor & Taylor [1911]/2005:11).

With reference to Taylor’s Christian character formation, personal choices, ‘single-hearted, unreserved intention to follow the Lord,’ etc., Hoste accentuates the ‘great truth’ that ‘it is only in union with Christ by the Holy Ghost that the Christian has the power to carry into practice the precepts of [the] Lord’ ([1911]/2005:11). Taylor’s spiritual formation was thus the seedbed of his leitmotif of union and communion with God; moreover, it became a fecund space for new birthing, as evident in the following comment by Geraldine’s father Grattan Guinness:

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<sup>45</sup> Critical perspectives of the original CIM biographers will be included in this review, namely: Pollock (cf. 2.2.3); Griffiths (cf. 2.3.1); Broomhall (cf. 2.3.4); and Austin (cf. 2.5.4).

<sup>46</sup> Comprising five parts, Volume One covers the period 1776-1860. It provides details of the Taylor ancestry, family life in Barnsley, Yorkshire; their godly heritage and Methodist piety; childhood training and home environment, etc.; Taylor’s conversion, call, and consecration in 1849; his preparation for China, radical experiences and exercises in faith, acute sense of responsibility, personal discipline for a lifelong missionary vocation; medical training in London; adventurous voyage from Liverpool at the age of 21; and his arrival in war torn Shanghai on March 1, 1854.

The China Inland Mission was conceived in his soul, and every stage of its advance sprang from his personal exertions. In the quiet of his heart, in deep unutterable communings with God, the Mission had its origin, and it remains his memorial (The Foreword, in Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:3).

Concerning the Song of Songs, the impact on Taylor's inner life is discerned in the original biography. In Volume One, during his first six years in China (1854-1860), the Song of Songs features in Hudson and Maria's courtship (the Spring of 1857) as a 'wonderful discovery' of God's love for humanity, and a basis for their passionate love for each other ([1911]/2005:239; 443-445, 517-518). The Song also served as a refuge for the young lovers in fending off the prejudicial attacks of Miss Aldersey (guardian of 20-year-old Maria), who vehemently opposed the courtship and opined that Taylor was a poor, unworthy suitor for the more refined Maria.

In the roughly 35-year period covered by Volume Two (1869-1905),<sup>47</sup> which includes the death of Taylor's first wife Maria in 1870, and his marriage to Jennie Faulding in 1871, references to intimate communion with Christ the Beloved are prevalent.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, this second volume records in considerable detail the impact of both the Exchanged Life<sup>49</sup> and the Song of Songs on Taylor's inner life, including the influence of the holiness movement in Britain on the collective spirituality of the CIM ([1918]/2005:165-171; 1965:211).<sup>50</sup> These will be explored in more depth for an understanding of the contemporaneous influences on Taylor's mid-life spirituality and beyond. Volume Two also provides evidence of the reception and efficacy of Taylor's teaching on the Song of Songs: first, at the CIM conferences in Anqing, June 1882; and later in Shanxi in 1866 ([1918]/2005: 358-359, 391-395). On the international level, on his first trip to North America in 1888, at the invitation of Moody, Taylor's talks on the Song were inspiring and 'quickened the spirit' of the audience ([1918]/2005:427-429). In terms of personal presence, his embodiment of the 'lover-like attitude' of the Song of Songs in relation to Christ impressed his host in Australia, in 1890-1891 ([1918]/2005:478-481).

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<sup>47</sup> Volume Two (covering 1860-1905) comprises eight parts; beginning with Hudson and Maria's first return to England together in 1860; the preparation and formation of the CIM in 1865; the CIM's establishment in the Hangzhou/Zhenjiang/Yangzhou areas in 1866; the expansion into unreached provinces; the prayer for eighteen; the second half of Taylor's life, including the Exchanged Life; the death of Maria in 1870, and his second marriage to Jennie Faulding in 1871; the call for seventy workers; and 'The Hundred' (1881-1887); then 'the Coming Thousand' (1888-1895); the internationalisation of the CIM; etc.

<sup>48</sup> The references to divine-human intimacy are too numerous to mention (cf. Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:182, 222, 274, 311-312, 358-359, 427-429, 443-446, 448, 450, 478-481, 490-496, 542, 553, 564, 575, 573-581).

<sup>49</sup> The prelude, the defining moment, and the effect of the Exchanged Life experience are covered quite comprehensively in three chapters (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:155-214).

<sup>50</sup> The influences of the Holiness Movement and Keswick Convention are briefly mentioned in several sources; notably, Broomhall (1929:156-158); Steer (1990; 1995); Broomhall (2005a:370; 2005b:109, 252-253, 494).

2.2.2 *The Man Who Believed God* (Broomhall 1929); *By Love Compelled* (Broomhall 1936)

Broomhall's first biography, *The Man Who Believed God* (1929), is indebted to 'the larger Life' (1929:vii), co-authored by his cousin Howard and Geraldine. Compared to the roughly 1,200-paged original biography, this non-chronological adopts a topical or thematic approach that interweaves key aspects of Taylor's life and writings.<sup>51</sup> The Chronological Summary delineates Taylor's publications, conferences, etc. (1929:237-241); moreover, it records the Exchanged Life as 'Hudson Taylor's personal Pentecost' (1929:237). The details of this transformative event are less elaborate than the original biography; however, the chapter 'The Eternal Springs of God' (1929:156-163) highlights the key Johannine metaphors of living water and the True Vine to illustrate Taylor's newfound soul rest – a joyous abiding in Christ that supplanted human striving (1929:158-159). As in the case of the original biography, two prominent works are noted that Taylor read at the time, namely: *How to live on Christ*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe, and *Christ is All* (1929:156). He was deeply moved by the former, and consequently sent a copy of the little booklet to every member of the CIM (1929:156). Broomhall's comment is important, that Taylor was evidently 'reading a good deal on this subject [of personal holiness] at this time', though the extent to which his 'sense of failure was independent of, or related to, his reading is perhaps impossible now to say' (1929:156-158). Further analysis of Taylor's reading will be conducted in this research.

An outstanding contribution of Broomhall's biography is the reference to Taylor as 'one of the true Mystics of the Church' (1929:138), which he associates with *Union and Communion*. He also links Taylor's writing on the Song of Songs with the 'joy and satisfaction' that he found in his 'wedded love', which illustrates the connection between his sexuality and spirituality. This integral approach is underscored by the following assertion: 'No one can understand Hudson Taylor, as he really was, without recognizing that all life's family relationships spoke to him of those eternal realities of which they are types' (1929:138).

Broomhall also cites Martin's<sup>52</sup> description of Taylor as 'a mystic' in his early days in Shanghai, apparently 'absorbed in religious dreams, waiting to have his work revealed; not idle, but aimless' (1929:82). Applying it to the context<sup>53</sup> of Taylor's courtship with Maria, he highlights the prejudicial assessment of Miss Aldersey (Maria's guardian), who regarded

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<sup>51</sup> The key writings to which Broomhall refers include: *Separation and Service* (1929:140); *Unfailing Springs* (1929:162); *China's Spiritual Need and Claims* (1929:167, 205, 206); *To Every Creature*, in 1889 (1929:174); *China's Millions* (1929:188, 206, 207, 209); *The Secret of Success* (1929:188); *Spiritual Science* (1929:189); *Lessons from the Incarnation* (1929:191); *Apostolic Example* (1929:191); *A Retrospect* (1929:206); etc.

<sup>52</sup> W.A.P. Martin's quote is cited in full in Chapter 1 of this research (cf. 1.1.3).

<sup>53</sup> Broomhall's adaptation of Martin's description is also adopted by Pollock ([1962]/1996:74-75) and Austin (2000:217-218).

Taylor as a poor missionary without professional status, and no settled income; one who degraded himself by adapting to Chinese clothes, diet and lifestyle, etc. As a counterargument, Broomhall clarifies that Taylor was not an idle, aimless dreamer, but a man of faith who had developed into a strong and well-equipped leader and became ‘a master builder’ (1929:185, 192).<sup>54</sup> He therefore underscores that Taylor was a practical mystic, whose work had ‘both spirit and form, principles and practice’; however, ‘the spirit came first’ (1929:185).

Following the writing of *The Man Who Believed God*, Broomhall’s reading of Taylor’s early letters and writings convinced him that ‘the motive-power’ behind the CIM ‘was as much love as faith’ (Houghton 1965:13). In the smaller volume, *By Love Compelled*, Broomhall therefore asserts that the CIM was ‘an outlet for love’ for Taylor (1936:11-16). These characteristics of faith and love will be developed in this research for an elucidation of the essential characteristics of Taylor’s missionary vocation. Suffice it to note at this point three descriptions of the love motif. First, love was pre-eminent in Taylor’s motivation for mission. Echoing the language of the Song of Songs and 1 Cor 13, Broomhall refers to the inextinguishable ‘flame of sacred love’ that burned in Taylor’s heart, and underscores that without love, ‘faith to remove mountains ... is nothing’ (1936:13). Second, he cites *The Wisdom of Solomon*, which refers to the Sovereign Lord as ‘Thou Lover of men’s souls’ (1936:16); this phrase points to the value of Wisdom Literature (including the Song of Songs) in exploring divine-human intimacy and Taylor’s expressions of soul love. Third, the chapter ‘Love, Strong as Death’ (1936:47-52), a further echo of the Song of Songs, captures the CIM’s attitudes of forbearance and forgiveness in response to the atrocities of the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. Although the CIM lost 58 adults and 21 children in the massacre (1936:49),<sup>55</sup> Taylor declined compensation by the Chinese and discouraged desires for revenge by missionaries. The express aim was to demonstrate divine love and forgiveness, which became an extraordinary testimony of ‘not repaying evil with evil’ (Fung 2018:211-213).

### 2.2.3 *Hudson and Maria* (Pollock 1962; [1962]/1996)

The original title of Pollock’s biography, *Hudson and Maria: Pioneers in China* (1962), was subsequently revised as *Hudson and Maria: A Match Made in Heaven* ([1962]/1996). His work marks an important turning point in the CIM/OMF literature, as he includes new information based on his reading of the original manuscripts. He critiques the original biographers’ lack of

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<sup>54</sup> In this larger sense, Martin’s description of Taylor as ‘the Loyola of Protestant Missions’ is apt (cf. 1.1.3).

<sup>55</sup> In total, 135 missionaries and 53 children were killed by the Boxers, along with thousands of Chinese Christians. Of the total of 188, just over 100 were British, 56 Swedish, and 32 Americans (Broomhall 1936:49).

transparency, omission of certain facts, and one-sided portrayal of Taylor;<sup>56</sup> and asserts that Geraldine ‘pruned and polished [extracts of Taylor’s letters] to conform to her own standards of delicacy and elegance’ ([1962]/1996:7-8).<sup>57</sup> In contrast, Pollock’s writing separates the ‘gobbets of meditation and reflection’ from the facts ([1962]/1996:7); hence a paradigm shift from the devotional tone and Victorian style of the earlier biographies. Pollock thereby evokes contemporary critique and expands the horizon for subsequent authors. For example, Broomhall (2005a:xv) credits Pollock for making him aware 20 years earlier of the existence of ‘unused archive documents’, which contributed to his writing of *Hudson Taylor and China’s Open Century*, originally published in 1981 (reviewed in 2.3.4 below).

As a departure from tradition, in Pollock’s reading, Hudson Taylor as the ‘revered father-figure’, adored by the original biographers, ‘dissolved into a most lovable young man with a strong sense of fun’ ([1962]/1996:7). He portrays the ‘Yorkshire lad of obscure origin, indifferent education and miserable health who dared the seemingly impossible in the teeth of opposition, western and oriental’ ([1962]/1996:5) not only as an adventurous missionary,<sup>58</sup> but as an intensely passionate lover. Based on ‘one of the great love stories of all time’ (1962:9), Pollock asserts that the love between Hudson and Maria is ‘an epic love story’, and ‘an exciting slice of missionary biography’; moreover, it is ‘proof of the wonder and power of Christian love’ ([1962]/1996:6). His descriptions are both entertaining and enlightening; however, Broomhall considers this biographical account ‘imaginative’ (2005a:xv).<sup>59</sup> Pollock correctly highlights Taylor’s long-distance courtship with Elizabeth Sissons in England during his early days in China, which is omitted in the original biography. In fact, he suggests that Taylor was ‘riding two mares’, as he had already met Maria and was considering his options; however, Sissons’ refusal ended the courtship in April 1857 ([1962]/1996:74-79). Regarding Hudson and Maria finding refuge in the Song of Songs during their courtship ([1962]/1996:83), it is noteworthy that Pollock retains the intimate language of the original letters ([1962]/1996:195).

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<sup>56</sup> Pollock comments that the two volumes were guided by Taylor’s successor D.E. Hoste, whose aim was to not shake public confidence in the CIM ([1962]/1996:7). Broomhall adds that many contemporaries were still alive at the time of writing, and therefore ‘only one-sided accounts were considered appropriate’ (2005b:245).

<sup>57</sup> Howard compiled the facts and ‘the gist of the narrative’, while Geraldine moulded the text into its final form, which is ‘impregnated with her personality’ (Pollock [1962]/1996:7).

<sup>58</sup> As one of many exemplary evangelical Christians at the forefront of change, with outstanding character, human qualities, remarkable adventures, influential writings, etc., Taylor is cited in several short biographical chapters not reviewed here; among others, Wiersbe (1976); Pollock (1998); Piper (2016).

<sup>59</sup> Atherstone & Ceri Jones (2019:16-18) delineate the pros and cons of Pollock’s popular and ‘multitudinous writings’, which helped to shape the narrative of British evangelicalism in the 18th and 19th centuries, and of the post-war transatlantic ‘neo-evangelical’ resurgence. They also note the criticism he received in 1996 for his authorised biography of Billy Graham, which was considered by various critics to be adulatory, hagiographical, hero-worship, missing the ‘essential salt of the prophets and apostles’, etc.

The young lovers were evidently captivated by the divine gift of human sexuality, while Hudson ensured that God be the centre of their affection and the primary object of their devotion. Thus, by loving God ‘*best*, most constantly and with unfailing constancy’, they would ‘not love one another *too much*’ ([1962]/1996:195). Pollock also highlights recreational interests; namely, the young Taylor’s ‘single relaxation was shooting’, while Maria accompanied him in climbing the hills and walking in the fields, and carrying any game he might have shot ([1962]/1996:168).

Finally, in addition to an extraordinary love story, revealing letters of human sexuality, and youthful fun, the significance of the Yangzhou Riot in 1868-1869 is delineated in three chapters ([1962]/1996:169-199), and describes the intensity of the political Chinese-British tensions; the internal disputes within the fledgling CIM; and many other crises that impacted on Taylor’s ‘Exchanged Life’ experience. In these early years of the mission’s development, Taylor’s shortcomings and poor judgment are noted, as well as his difficulties in balancing work, prayer, sleep, and recreation. A point of significance for this research is Maria’s competence as ‘mother’ to the fledgling CIM, her calm spirituality during Taylor’s spiritual crisis, and her ways of dealing with the family’s ill-health while caring for their young children (1962]/1996:150-167). In sum, Pollock’s work offers engaging insights for a holistic understanding of the internal and external factors that impacted on Taylor’s Exchanged Life.

#### 2.2.4 *J. Hudson Taylor: A Man in Christ* (Steer 1990)

Steer’s biography includes a Foreword by Billy Graham, and an Epilogue by James Hudson Taylor III, then General Director of OMF (1990:369). It is a highly readable, fully-fledged biography,<sup>60</sup> which presents a kaleidoscope of youthful, vulnerable, romantic, tenuous, light-hearted, honest, and humorous descriptions. For example, sailing to China from Liverpool on *The Dumfries* on September 19, 1853, the curious 21-year-old Yorkshire lad delighted much in nature, fish, and birds; and enjoyed swimming in the ocean on a raft with the captain. He also provided medical assistance to the crew; engaged in hobbies such as photography, journaling, singing, playing the concertina, and dissecting animals; and he even taught algebra, the concertina, and the flute to the crew (1990:46-54).

As a more complete biography than Pollock’s, Steer covers the importance of Taylor’s second marriage, to Jennie (Miss Mary Jane Faulding, on November 28, 1871, in London), one of the CIM’s ‘*Lammermuir Party*’ who pioneered worked in Hangzhou, and became a close

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<sup>60</sup> The Chinese translation of Steer’s biography ([1990]/1990) is entitled: 戴德生：摯愛中華.

family friend to the Taylors.<sup>61</sup> Intricate family/personal details are recorded, such as the birth of Hudson and Jennie's stillborn twins in China, in April 1873 (1990:252); and later, the unusual circumstances of the birth of their first child Ernest in 1875, in the CIM's home in London. Taylor's life story is also marked by recurrent illnesses, namely: neuralgia (1990:211); pneumonia (1990:233); and dysentery, which he suffered all through his life (1990:243, 264).

Read alongside Pollock's work, Steer's biography highlights the lacuna of an unwritten story, specifically of 'Hudson and Jennie'. The rationale is that Jennie deserves due recognition for her sacrificial and pioneering role in the expanding CIM, and as Taylor's soul mate for over three decades (till her death in 1904, in Switzerland). Steer notes that her love was 'not jealous', for she also loved Maria (1990:246-253); consequently, Hudson and Jennie's marriage was 'as romantic as it was sacrificial, of nearly three times as many years as the twelve he had enjoyed with Maria, and as rich' (Broomhall 2005b:168-175). It is thus a grave oversight that Taylor's second marriage is not explicitly stated in the Chronological Outline of the *Spiritual Secret* (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1958:168); instead, it simply records Taylor's return to China on October 9, 1872, with Mrs. Taylor (*née* Faulding). Similarly, in Taylor's partial autobiography, only Maria is mentioned ([1894a]/2010:87, 96). This highlights the need to be informed by multiple perspectives, and to read across a wide spectrum of primary and secondary sources across the 150 plus years of literature on Taylor, as this Literature Review demonstrates.

### **2.3 Historical works (1892-2005)**

Works reviewed in this section are limited to five CIM/OMF publications, spanning the entire 20th century. They invariably include brief biographical data on Taylor; however, they are classified here as '*historical*', as they provide important data, such as statistics on Protestant missions in China; the CIM's strategies, challenges, developmental stages; and its contribution to Chinese church history.<sup>62</sup> The particular focus in this section is on the historical contexts in which Taylor's spirituality is emphasised. For example, Latourette contends, in *A History of Christian Missions in China* ([1929]/2009), that the favoring historical conditions during the four decades from 1865 to 1905 – of 'growing prosperity and comparative peace for the Protestant missions' – would have been ineffective had it not been for Taylor's 'daring, simple faith, utter sincerity, and completely unselfish devotion' ([1929]/2009:385).

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<sup>61</sup> The vital role of significant women in Taylor's life and work are elaborated by Thompson (1982); Tucker (1983, 1988, 2011); Griffiths (2004), among others.

<sup>62</sup> Not reviewed in this section are short chapters, which summarise the history and contribution of the CIM; these include, among others: Latourette ([1929]/2009); Tucker (1983, 2011); Kane (1994); Tiedemann (2010).

### 2.3.1 *The Story of the China Inland Mission* (Guinness [1892]/1977; [1894]/1977)

The two-volume story of the CIM, which Geraldine began writing in Shanghai,<sup>63</sup> was published before the original biography, and serves as its historical complement. In the Introduction ([1892]/1977:xi-xii), Taylor expresses the hope that this publication would serve as ‘a small contribution to the history of missions’; he also affirms it as a record of the CIM’s ‘tried and tested spiritual principles’ after more than 25 years since the mission’s founding, which began as an interdenominational mission, and developed into an international mission.<sup>64</sup> Murray lauds this work as ‘one of the most instructive of mission narratives’,<sup>65</sup> yet suggests an abridgement or cheaper edition (1902:113). Meanwhile, Broomhall views it as a ‘chatty, readable’ story of the CIM (2005b:600). In fact, Geraldine’s story complements two of Taylor’s short works, namely: *A Retrospect* ([1894a]/2006),<sup>66</sup> and *After Thirty Years* (1895);<sup>67</sup> the latter is a more ‘factual, statistical statement of policy and fulfilment’ (Broomhall 2005b:600). Her focus on field work and broader missional issues includes a section on ‘Woman’s Work for Woman’ (Guinness ([1894]/1977:277-391). Reading this work is important, as it counteracts Griffiths’ critique that Geraldine selected material ‘which she thought spiritually important’ for the biography; and therefore advocates for a stronger historical focus for the CIM (as in *China’s Millions*), which reflects the role of missionaries in addressing social justice issues, such as Britain’s complicit role in the opium trade (The Foreword, in Lyall [1965]/1976:11).

In Volume 1, credit is given to Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary to China, who arrived in Canton in September 1807; the purpose is to highlight the remarkable developments afforded by the openings for the Gospel in China since that point.<sup>68</sup> By tracing the rise and progress of modern missions in 19th century China, and also noting the adverse

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<sup>63</sup> Lucy Guinness, then editor of *Regions Beyond*, edited and illustrated her sister Geraldine’s letters from China, and published 5,000 copies of *In the Far East* (1889); it was sold out within five months (Guinness [1949]/1950:97). Following the success of this first book by Geraldine, Taylor commissioned her to write the history of the CIM, just prior to the Shanghai missionary conference in May 1890 ([1949]/1950:98-100).

<sup>64</sup> At the time of writing (October 1892), the CIM comprised 550 missionaries, plus 200 native helpers; and the mission stations were scattered over a wide continental area.

<sup>65</sup> Geraldine’s niece provides photographs and background to the process of writing the two volumes (the first was published in 1892 and the second in 1894, both in London), as well as the immediate popularity and influence as missionary literature (Guinness [1949]/1950: 88-89; 107; 108; 111-112, 113).

<sup>66</sup> Part II, Volume 1, is devoted to ‘J. Hudson Taylor: A Retrospect’ (Guinness [1892]/1977:47-185), though it is not synchronous with Taylor’s original version, published in 1894. *A Retrospect* is included in Dorsey’s collection ([1894a]/2006:289-379), and appears under several other titles; notably, *J. Hudson Taylor: An Autobiography* ([1894a]/2010), which will be used in this research. Two translations are available in the Chinese traditional script: 獻身中華 ([1894a]/1986); and in the simplified script: 帶著愛來中國 ([1894a]/2004); the Chinese translations carry the English title, *To China with Love*.

<sup>67</sup> Taylor delineates the three decades of the CIM’s work, as follows: first, ‘establishment’; second, ‘extension’; and third, ‘development and consolidation’ (1895).

<sup>68</sup> For example, at the time of writing, the General Missionary Conference in Shanghai in 1890 was represented by 1,300 missionaries, and a Chinese church comprising over 37,000 members (Guinness [1892]/1977:5).

effects of opium on Chinese national life, Geraldine locates the formative years of the CIM within the context of these historical developments. Several chapters are worth noting as a prelude to the original biography, namely: the ‘Yang-Chau Riot’ in 1868-1869 (Chapter XIII); and the year 1870, which is described as ‘*Thick Darkness Where God Was*’ (Chapter XVI). Following the Tientsin massacre, this exceptionally trying year resulted in Taylor and Jennie Faulding returning to England in 1871, both in ill-health ([1892]/1977:448). Though the term ‘*the Exchanged Life*’ is not mentioned, the trials are interspersed with themes of abiding in Christ, the secret of satisfaction in Christ, and the metaphor of ‘living water’ to satiate their hungry and thirsty souls ([1892]/1977:411, 457); while the final epilogue includes an extract from the poem ‘The True Vine’ ([1892]/1977:462).<sup>69</sup>

Volume 2 (in five parts), covers roughly the period from 1873 to 1894, which includes a description of ‘the lowest ebb, and the turn of the tide’ (1874-1875), both in China and in England ([1894]/1977:109-122). Following that low point, the ‘turn’ in 1875 is marked by several key factors, namely: God’s answer to the CIM’s appeal and prayer for ‘the Eighteen’ for the closed areas of China; the publication of its new periodical *China’s Millions*<sup>70</sup> in July ([1894]/1977:109-126); and the ratification of the Chefoo Convention on September 13, 1876, which opened a wider door for access into the heart of China ([1894]/1977:150). These lows and highs evince the paradoxical power of this story of God’s strength/human weakness ([1892]/1977:3), as well as the death/rebirth symbolism in the history of the CIM/OMF.

### 2.3.2 *The Jubilee Story of the China Inland Mission* (Broomhall 1915)<sup>71</sup>

Broomhall’s succinct story of the CIM was published with an updated record and a selection of glossy black and white photographs in celebration of the CIM’s Jubilee (1915:ix). Relying on Geraldine’s story of the CIM, as well as on Volume One of the official biography, he delineates five decades of the mission’s development (1865-1875; 1875-1885; 1885-1895; 1895-1905; and 1905-1915). The most notable update is the final decade, which highlights the mass movements in different parts of China since 1902; the spiritual awakening among tribal peoples; CIM’s work with the Miao, Lisu, and Tibetans, and in Urumqi and Mongolia; institutional work, which includes medical missions, schools, literature; etc. Noteworthy also

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<sup>69</sup> This poetic extract was important to Taylor, also cited in *Union and Communion* (cf. 3.4.7 of this research).

<sup>70</sup> Following the last issue of the *Occasional Papers* in March 1875, the CIM’s magazine was entitled ‘*China’s Millions and our Work among them*’ until the adoption of the shorter title, *China’s Millions*, at the end of the year. Jennie Taylor is credited for citing her husband’s oft-used phrase ‘*China’s Millions*’ to clarify that the CIM existed for China’s millions; hence the birth of the new title for the CIM magazine (Broomhall 2005b:258).

<sup>71</sup> References to the Exchanged Life (‘personal Pentecost’), the Song of Songs, and *Union and Communion* are located in Broomhall’s two biographies (cf. 2.2.2 above), not in his Jubilee Story.

is his marking of 1887 as an important year in the literary work of the CIM, mainly through the linguistic gifts of F. W. Baller, whose *Mandarin Primer* became popular beyond the CIM. Several of his Chinese translations were also well received, including his translation of Taylor's *A Retrospect* (Broomhall 1915:300-301). Other significant additions worth mentioning are the Appendix I, on Associate Missions (1915:357-365);<sup>72</sup> and Appendix II, an excellent Chronological Summary of the five decades (1915:366-371), which records the 'Anti-Opium Debate in Parliament' (1906, May 30); and the 'Total Cessation of Indo-Chinese Opium Trade announced in Parliament' (1913, May 7). Interspersed with statistical data, Broomhall quotes Taylor's emphasis on spiritual means and motivation; in particular, accentuating love, sympathy, getting close to people, and making heart contact with the Chinese; in sum, 'God employs human instrumentalities and human sympathies in carrying on His work' (1915:356).

### 2.3.3 *A Passion for the Impossible* (Lyll [1965]/1976)<sup>73</sup>

Following on from the Jubilee story, Lyall's work was originally published in the CIM's centennial year (1965), and is therefore subtitled 'the China Inland Mission, 1865-1965'. It was updated in 1976. The title, *A Passion for the Impossible*, echoes one of Taylor's popular maxims, namely: 'I have found that there are three stages in every great work of God: first, it is impossible, then it is difficult, then it is done' ([1965]/1976:5). This historical account of the CIM is encapsulated by Lyall's emphasis on God's faithfulness (the divine agent) and faith in God (the human response), as follows:

God raised up Hudson Taylor and the C.I.M. to become monuments to one thing: the utter faithfulness of God and the practicability of a simple trust in God as a basis for living. More than a century of stormy history has been a sufficient test of the validity of Hudson Taylor's faith ([1965]/1976:38-39).

Affirming the validity, continuity, and sustainability of Taylor's 'impossible' vision, Lyall clarifies that this belief was not based on romanticism; rather, it was grounded in human weakness and transcended through divine power. Taylor's transformative 1869 experience is a case in point, though only briefly mentioned. Lyall describes it as a 'fresh experience of God which revolutionised [Taylor's] whole life' ([1965]/1976:41); he interprets the experience as 'exchanging his own defeated life for Christ's, his own weakness for Christ's strength'; a newfound reality that spilled over onto other CIM workers, who 'caught the infection of this

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<sup>72</sup> Broomhall's record states that 282 missionaries were connected with 11 Associate Missions, primarily Scandinavian, German, and Swiss (1915:357-365).

<sup>73</sup> Lyall's work has been translated into Chinese, under the title: 不可能的信心 ([1965]/2020).

experience and were inspired to new ventures of faith' ([1965]/1976:41). The impact of Taylor's transformation on the spirituality of the CIM will be elucidated in this research.

Lyall's story of the CIM traverses the 20th century, and therefore includes the transition into the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF), which was formalised in 1964. Taking up the CIM mantle was no smooth path for OMF. In fact, Lyall marks 1951 as a 'Red Sea experience' ([1965]/1976:35), when all seemed doom and gloom; however, prayerful decision and strategic planning by the OMF council members at a meeting in Australia enabled the mission to find its new footing. This description signifies the death/resurrection motif in the transitions and development of the mission. Furthermore, the CIM's vision transformed from 'the travail of a single man for China's millions' to OMF's 'travail ... for all the millions of East Asia' ([1965]/1976:215-216). OMF experienced further transformations when loosening its century old Western orientation and opening the membership to all nationalities; it thus became 'a channel of missionary service for Asians too' ([1965]/1976:194).<sup>74</sup>

Lyall delineates a three-fold 'secret of the perennial vigour' of OMF as follows: 'motive power'; 'message'; and 'methods' ([1965]/1976:212). First, the motive power is simply 'the exercise of a living faith in God'. Second, the message is also faith-based, namely: 'faith in the authority of Holy Scripture'; hence, the mission 'unashamedly preaches the unexpurgated Gospel of Christ and Him crucified'. Third, the methods of mission is 'the establishing of national churches, healthily independent of western control and support but in warm fellowship with all churches sharing the same faith' ([1965]/1976:212-214).

#### 2.3.4 *The Shaping of Modern China* (Broomhall 2005a; 2005b)

Broomhall's seven-volume series, entitled *Hudson Taylor and China's Open Century*, was originally published in 1981 (Broomhall 2005a:xv).<sup>75</sup> According to Covell (1998:658), it is '[t]he most definitive work' on Hudson Taylor. This is a fitting assessment, as it was partially inspired by the historian Latourette, who commended Taylor and the CIM for their remarkable contribution to the history of Christian missions in China (cf. 1.1.1 of this research). Republished in two volumes as *The Shaping of Modern China: Hudson Taylor's Life and Legacy* (2005a; 2005b), this literary monument is invaluable to the current research.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Chang *et al.* (2005) records the contribution of Asian colleagues to the CIM/OMF history; notably the appointment of Dr Patrick Fung as first Asian General Director in 2006, with his wife Dr Jennie Fung.

<sup>75</sup> Alfred James Broomhall (1911-1994), commonly referred to as 'Jim Broomhall', was the grandson of Benjamin and Amelia Broomhall, and among the third generation of Broomhalls involved in China ministries. For contemporary perspectives on his role in OMF in its early years, Roberts' article (2020) is worth noting.

<sup>76</sup> Key phrases such as *Union and Communion* are easier to locate in the index of the seven volumes, compared to the 2005 edition which omits the index.

Bypassing the classic biographies, Broomhall's reading of the original manuscripts 'unearthed much historical value and human interest'; consequently, his story is an 'abridged but unexpurgated, unembellished collection of facts'; and a presentation of the 'full story' through a 'prosaic approach' (2005a:xv). The original biography, in his view, focuses on 'the devotional side' of Taylor's life and mission, and presents 'the man of God'; however, he critiques the filial Howard and Geraldine as 'generous, emphasizing the strengths and passing over the weaknesses'; thus, few detrimental references appear in the biography or remain in the archives (2005b:xv). Though Broomhall's work is dense in historical detail, valuable nuggets provide insight into Taylor's spirituality and humanity. For example, he states with little elaboration that Taylor's 'practice of the presence of God' (2005a:623)<sup>77</sup> is 'the only explanation' for his ability to remain resolute and resilient during the first two years as leader of the fledgling CIM – 'one of the most crucial periods of his life' – when he dealt with differing personalities, internal conflicts, and circumstances 'which would have defeated many men' (2005a:623). The presence of God in Taylor's life and mission is central to his spirituality; hence the need to explore his essential spiritual practices (or soul work) in this study.

Broomhall's voluminous work is especially useful in verifying information cited in the original biography; in particular, the significance of the Song of Songs in Taylor's life and writings, as well as the authenticity of *Union and Communion*. For example, he confirms the prominence of the Song of Songs in Taylor's letters to his sister Amelia in April 1857 (2005a:398); and again, during the young Hudson and Maria's courtship in 1857-1858, they both found comfort in the 'fervid' Song of Songs (2005a:424). Later, when separated from Jennie for several months because of a ministry trip in China (1882-1883), Taylor had been 'feasting on the Song of Solomon' during those six to eight months. These insights inspired his expositions at the CIM conference in Anqing, June 24 to July 1 (2005b:404-405), which were published initially as a series in the lead articles in *China's Millions* (May 1890 - October 1891); and later in book form, under the title *Union and Communion* (1894),<sup>78</sup> which went through many reprints (2005b:404-405). Regarding the CIM conference proceedings in Shanxi, in 1886, when Taylor also expounded the Song of Songs, Beauchamp compiled a record, based on Stanley Smith's notes, which was published in 1890, entitled *Days of Blessing in Inland*

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<sup>77</sup> Taylor's copy of Brother Lawrence's book, *Practice of the Presence of God*, is held at the OMF UK archives; it was a gift from a friend in North America, which Taylor dates as 'Toronto, 1892'.

<sup>78</sup> Based on Broomhall's record, Wiersbe's statement is incorrect and misleading, that Taylor wrote his devotional commentary on the Song of Songs 'while he was courting Maria!' (1976:67). Anderson's statement is also inaccurate, that Taylor wrote the book *Union and Communion* in 1883 (2013:112).

*China* (2005b:461). Broomhall's work is therefore helpful in clarifying the accuracy and authenticity of primary source material, notably *Union and Communion*.

Taylor's personal data is also well documented within the historical China context. For example, details on the Taylor family and the CIM in 1868 and 1869 are concise, factual, and chronological, delineating the family struggles, illnesses, the death of their first child Gracie in 1867 (2005a:815-835); the adversity, testing and purifying of the Yangchow Riot (2005b:7-108); etc. However, on the Exchanged Life, Broomhall's biography is not 'the most definitive'. Deferring to the original biography, and suggesting that the subject is well covered there, he devotes only three pages to the pivotal point in 1869 when Taylor's life 'came to be revolutionalised' (2005b:109-111). He describes it as a 'silver lining', and 'timely preparation for the hardest experiences yet to come his way' (2005b:117). Echoing the original biography, he employs terminology such as a 'dark cloud', to describe 1870, one of the most difficult years in Taylor's experience, when Maria died of cholera in China (2005b:117-171); and 1870-1871 as a period of 'desolation' (2005b:117-168). As mystical terminology with paradoxical motifs, the metaphors of 'darkness' and 'desolation' validate the use of such terms in exploring Taylor's Exchanged Life. Moreover, subsequent to the period of the 'dark cloud', Taylor's romance with Jennie Faulding and their eventual marriage in London, in 1871, may be aptly viewed through the birth/death symbolism (2005b:172-175).

As per Geraldine's story of the CIM, 1874 is marked as the lowest ebb in the life of the mission (2005b:213-231, 243). Interestingly, Broomhall cites a poignant meditation,<sup>79</sup> dated 1874, that was found in Taylor's hand at his death (2005b:750-751);<sup>80</sup> his summation is that it opens 'a window on his soul, on the true Hudson Taylor who wanted to be like Christ, cost what it might' (2005b:750).<sup>81</sup> Following this low point, the 'turn of the tide' in 1875 ushered in the CIM's 'most historic eight or ten years' (2005b:243); another instance of the death/resurrection symbolism. Worth noting is the fact that the CIM's appeal for eighteen new workers for the deep interior of China in 1875 was synchronous with the Brighton Convention and its preaching on 'the higher Christian life', which connects the CIM's historical 'turn of the tide' with 'the dawn of Protestant missionary expansion' (2005b:251-253).

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<sup>79</sup> Broomhall refers to #517 in the CIM archives (2005b:829); however, the correct reference in the SOAS collection is the following: CIM/JHT Box H, Folder H5 (Sep 1874 – Oct 1876), File H51, document H517. It does not contain a handwritten copy by Taylor, but several typed copies, presumably by the CIM biographers.

<sup>80</sup> Entitled 'Others May, You Cannot!', several sources credit G.D. Watson (1845-1924) with this meditation: <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/others-may-you-cannot-leaflets/george-douglas-watson/pd6095> <http://articles.ochristian.com/article14043.shtml>; <https://bible.org/illustration/others-may-you-cannot>

<sup>81</sup> Quotations from this meditation have been incorrectly attributed to Taylor and incorporated into his spiritual legacy (cf. Chang *et al.* 2005:170-171; Broomhall 2018:209-210). However, the CIM archives do not specify that Taylor is the author; a note merely indicates that it was found among his letters/papers.

### 2.3.5 *Christ Alone*: 惟獨基督 (Chang *et al.* 2005)

This bilingual English Chinese publication, with a shared Chinese title, has a fresh appeal and is enlivened by an attractive pictorial guide; hence the subtitle: ‘*A Pictorial Representation of Hudson Taylor’s Life and Legacy*’.<sup>82</sup> The book is divided into two main parts, namely: Taylor’s biography, and his spiritual legacy. The first part provides a succinct summary of his heritage (1776-1849); conversion and dedication (1849-1853); early years in China (1854-1860); and first period back in England (1860-1866). Five phases of the CIM’s work in China are then delineated across five decades (2005:vi), as follows: ‘Taking Root’ (1865-1875); ‘Inland Pioneering’ (1875-1885); ‘Internationalization’ (1885-1895); ‘Generational Change’ (1895-1905); and ‘Consolidation and Expansion’ (1905-1951). Finally, the CIM’s progression into OMF unfolded (1951-2005) after its last missionary’s exodus from China in 1951. Considering this marker, *Christ Alone* is to some extent a helpful supplement to and continuation of Lyall’s account (cf. 2.3.3 above).

The second part, Taylor’s spiritual legacy, comprises quotations extracted from diaries, letters, and *China’s Millions*; these have been translated into Chinese. On the Exchanged Life, a brief section refers to September 4, 1869, as ‘The Pentecost of Hudson Taylor and the CIM’,<sup>83</sup> when Taylor ‘tasted the joy of union with Christ’ and God made him “a new man” (2005:53). Only one spiritual insight emanating from this pivotal event is mentioned, as follows:

The words, “abide in Me and I in you”, presuppose a vital union as already existing between ourselves and the Lord Jesus and exhort us to live in the power and enjoyment of this union (2005:181).<sup>84</sup>

*Christ Alone* is undoubtedly a valuable historical resource; however, *Union and Communion* is completely overlooked, both in the presentation of Taylor’s life and legacy and in the Bibliography. This research will therefore fill the gap in hopes of augmenting Taylor’s legacy.

## 2.4 Devotional works (1931-2006)

According to Benjamin Broomhall,<sup>85</sup> the early volumes of *Chinas Millions* are Taylor’s ‘best, and all-unconsciously-written, autobiography’, portraying his ‘true character’; while his

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<sup>82</sup> The photographic collection in this publication is invaluable, notably, The Appendix, which contains photographs and genealogies of the Taylor family/legacy (Chang *et al.* 2005:122-125; 192-193).

<sup>83</sup> This phrase echoes Broomhall’s use of the term ‘personal Pentecost’ (1929:237; cf. 2.2.2 above).

<sup>84</sup> The Chinese translation (cf. Chang *et al.* 2005:181) reads as follows:

「『常在我裏面的，我也常在他裏面』這一句話，表達了一個先決條件，就是我們與主耶穌之間早已存在的合一，並勉勵我們在這既有能力、又充滿喜樂的合一中生活。」

<sup>85</sup> Benjamin Broomhall’s editorial work on *China’s Millions* is noted in the previous chapter (cf. footnote number 17).

comments on Scriptural texts ‘are faithful reflections of the missionary zeal – the faith – the prayerfulness which made Hudson Taylor what he was’ (Broomhall 1905:15-16). As a primary source, *China’s Millions* is not reviewed here; however, several works reviewed in this section contain excerpts from it and from Taylor’s other writings.

#### 2.4.1 *Hudson Taylor’s Legacy: A Series of Meditations* (Broomhall 1931)

Marshall Broomhall memorialises Taylor’s spiritual insights under a four-fold legacy (his message, his life, his work, and as ever-present leader). Designed to serve as daily meditations over a four-month period, this compilation of extracts, many sourced from *China’s Millions*, were written by Taylor ‘in the midst of battle and born out of the stress and travail of his soul’; therefore, they reflect heart-searching experiences, trials which almost crushed him, and crises which threatened to overwhelm him (1931:12-13). Wiersbe considers Broomhall’s collection as ‘especially valuable’, as it presents in Taylor’s own words his ‘basic philosophy of missions and ministry’ (1976:67).

The pertinent theme of ‘abiding in Christ’ (John 15 references) features prominently in Part One (Broomhall 1931:40, 41, 42); Part Two (1931: 60, 61, 62, 83); and Part Three (1931:118). A related theme in all four categories is ‘fellowship with God’, which Broomhall states ‘made Hudson Taylor what he was’ (1931:163). This *κοινωνία*, communion, partnership and friendship with God, was linked to his capacity to receive the inflow of the Spirit (1931:143); consequently, it was his practice of habitual drinking from the rivers of living water (John 4) that energised his leadership. Taylor’s final communication as General Director, which includes the subject of ‘spiritual inspiration’, reiterates that the CIM ‘must be a living body in fellowship with God, or it will be of no further use, and cannot continue’ (1931:89).

The language and influence of the Song of Songs on Taylor are evident in Part Four. For example, his deep spiritual longing in his early years in China is expressed in letters (dated April and May 1847) to his mother and sister Amelia (1931:155, 154, 158). Noteworthy also is the meditation on ‘Human and Divine Love’, in which Taylor advises Amelia on her betrothal to his childhood friend Benjamin Broomhall; here he affirms the Spirit’s gift of human love based on the Song of Songs (1931:154). Regarding Taylor’s own marital love and family relationships, however, Broomhall does not include any of Taylor’s personal letters to Maria, Jennie, and their children. Yet, he underscores elsewhere (1929:137-138, cf. 2.2.2 above) the importance of human love and family relationships in Taylor’s present experience of eternal realities. In the 21st century context (and in sync with the Song of Songs), meditations on both sexuality and spirituality would be apt for a holistic appreciation of Taylor’s legacy.

#### 2.4.2 *The Fire Burns On* (Houghton 1965)

The title, *The Fire Burns On*, draws on Bernard of Clairvaux's words 'newly aflame with the fire of God'; these words had been ringing in Houghton's ears since he read them 30 years previously (1965:229). Published in the CIM's centennial year,<sup>86</sup> this work issues a call to prayer for a continuation of the 'flame kindled by Hudson Taylor', and for hearts to be aflame with the love of the Lord. His compilation of extracts of Taylor's key texts, essential teaching, sermons, as well as CIM letters, testimonials, etc. (with the relevant years in which they were produced), provide a devotional complement to Lyall's centennial/historical work (cf. 2.3.3).

Houghton's stated purpose for writing is 'to examine afresh what were the marks of the C.I.M. in its earliest years' (1965:12). Several hallmarks are delineated, namely: proving the power of prayer and the need of prayer support; allegiance to the Scriptures as the very word of God; suffering as a corollary to faith in a crucified Saviour; the spiritual unity of the Body of Christ in an interdenominational mission; identification with the people; true oneness with the people; and the wondrous works of God demonstrated in human frailty (1965:14-15).

Relevant to Taylor's spirituality are the three aspects of faith, love, and hope (1965:13-15). On the aspect of *faith*, Houghton cites Taylor's three key principles articulated in 1876, which became foundational to the formation of the CIM, as follows: 'There is a living God. He has spoken in the Bible. He *means* what He says, and will do *all* that He has promised' (1965:13). In addition, as leader of a 'faith mission', Taylor's emphasis was not so much on faith, but rather on 'the object of faith – the living God', coupled with the assurance that '[o]ur faith may falter, but His faithfulness never' (1965:13). Since faith must work through love, he affirms that *love* was 'the first quality' in the CIM's selection and training of suitable candidates (1965:13). By way of illustration, a speaker in London in 1938 summed up 'the whole secret of the C.I.M.' in the following three words: "By Love Compelled" (1965:43), which echoes the title of Broomhall's second biography on Taylor (cf. 2.2.2 above). Regarding *hope*, it was specifically the 'hope of our Lord's return' that stirred the CIM to recognise the urgency of the mission's task (1965:13-14). Faith, hope and love, based on Paul's canticle (1 Cor 13), are highly relevant for an understanding of the mystical characteristics of Taylor's missionary vocation, and will be developed in Chapter 5 of this research.

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<sup>86</sup> Houghton (1894–1972) served as Bishop of Eastern Szechuan (1937-1940) and GD of the CIM (1940-1951); he is renowned for the popular missionary hymn 'Facing a Task Unfinished', which appears in this work (1965:208). His devotional emphasis is complemented by Lyall's historical perspective ([1965]/1976).

#### 2.4.3 *Hudson Taylor: Lessons in Discipleship* (Steer 1995)

Following on from Steer's biography (cf. 2.2.4), his second work is dedicated to James Hudson Taylor III, who asserted that his great grandfather's writings contain 'abiding principles' that 'can be learned and lived by any Christian' (The Epilogue, in Steer 1990:372). Steer identifies 100 lessons drawn from primary source material that reveal 'the heart of Hudson Taylor's faith' (1995:22-23). These are worth emulating, based on the following factors: in Taylor's middle and later years, he 'grew into one of the profoundest thinkers of all time'; his insights 'come close to capturing the essence of Christianity'; and they have 'added weight because it arose out of a life of action, forged on the anvil of suffering' (1995:24-25).

On 'the exchanged life' and 'union with Christ', which Steer previously cites in relation to the influences of *The Revival* magazine, the writings of Pearsall Smith on holiness, and the Keswick movement (1990:238), here he uses more generic terminology. The chronology, for example, refers to 'New insights into holiness' in the summer of 1869 (1995:143-149). Moreover, two sections are helpful in the chapter, 'The Way of Holiness' (1995:77-95),<sup>87</sup> as they delineate lessons on holiness, namely: 'If Only I could Abide in Christ' and 'Transforming Insights' (1995:82-84). Steer also briefly discusses Keswick's theology and clarifies Taylor's position. First, 'faith in Christ, looking to him, was as essential an ingredient in the pursuit of holiness as it is in our salvation' (1995:86). Second, Taylor maintained a balanced view of holiness in his belief and praxis (1995:86). Third, regarding 'the passive, receptive side of holiness', both Ryle and Packer's writings critiqued Keswick's imbalance (1995:85-86).

It is unfortunate, yet reflective of the contemporary neglect of Taylor's most characteristic work, that *Union and Communion* does not feature in the lessons in discipleship. In fact, it is not mentioned in Steer's chronology, nor in 'principal sources used' (1995:153). However, allusions to the leitmotif of union and communion are contained in the extract of Psalm 1:3, 'A Promise of True Prosperity' (1995:72-74), which Taylor expounds as the basis for 'fruitfulness' – a key aspect of his spirituality that will be addressed in this research.

#### 2.4.4 *The Collected Works of J. Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission* (Dorsey 2006)

Dorsey's extensive collection (2006) of Taylor's key writings and sermons complements the shorter devotional works reviewed thus far. It is worth noting his brief theological critique in the Introduction, given Taylor's enduring spiritual legacy and influence. On the one hand, he

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<sup>87</sup> The phrase 'the way of holiness' refers to the title of an article published in 1868 by the holiness movement, as cited in Volume II of the original biography (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:165, 169). Other readings that were catalytic in Taylor's Exchanged Life experience are also cited and will be incorporated in this research.

affirms Taylor's strong view of the inerrancy of Scripture, including his superb argument for 'verbal inspiration'; on the other hand, he critiques Taylor's biblical exegesis, which 'was tinged with a bit of ignorance', especially with regard to the proper use of literary forms in the Bible (2006:13). On the parable of the prodigal son, for example, Dorsey cautions readers to apply 'moderate discretion' before accepting some of Taylor's conclusions on doctrinal points (2006:14). Yet, on Song of Songs 5, he accepts Taylor's missiological interpretation that people 'are not out *with* Him doing what He is doing, so He feels at a distance' (2006:10). Dorsey commends Taylor's zeal for evangelism, and endorses the view that spiritual drought, desertion, and weariness are often caused by disobedience to the Great Commission.

Regarding the Exchanged Life, several texts represent Taylor's recollections in later life, which suggests that the 1869 experience was an authentic and lasting transformation. Selected texts include: Northfield Conference talk in 1888, on John 4 (2006:158-166); *Abiding in Christ* (2006:179-191), based on John 15, Taylor's favourite chapter since his conversion (2006:185); Mildmay in 1889, Taylor expiates on the Bridegroom of the Song (2006:237-239); Keswick in 1896, an exposition of John 15 (2006:283-287); and *Unfailing Springs*, based on John 4 and 7, published in 1902 (2006:213-219).

The downside of Dorsey's collection is that it is not arranged chronologically; nor does it provide introductions and historical detail to each extract; hence the need to consult Broomhall for verification (2005a; 2005b). Suffice it to mention that writings in the period 1875-1900 demonstrate the international scope of Taylor's teaching and influence. These include CIM conferences in China; bible readings at Mildmay and Keswick in England; and, in N. America, the Northfield Conference lectures, Massachusetts in 1888 and 1892, and the New York Ecumenical Conference address, in 1900 (2006:269-277), among others.

## **2.5 Missiological works (1902-2015)**

Spanning the entire 20th century, this section culminates in three thought provoking scholarly works, which offer a critical evaluation of Taylor's hermeneutics, missiology, ecclesiology, eschatology, cultural application, and contextualization principles, etc. This review, however, will highlight pertinent aspects of Taylor's (missionary) spirituality in these works.

### *2.5.1 The Key to the Missionary Problem* (Murray 1902)

Murray's chapter, 'The China Inland Mission and the Power of Believing Prayer on the CIM' (1902:95-115), is included in his compilation of the addresses of the Ecumenical Missionary

Conference, in New York, 1900.<sup>88</sup> Since Taylor's topic was entitled, 'The Source of Power', Murray quotes him accordingly:

The power given is not a gift from the Holy Ghost. He Himself is the power. ... We have given too much attention to methods and to machinery and to resources, and too little to the Source of Power – the filling with the Holy Ghost. This, I think, you will agree with me, is the great weakness, of our service in the past, and, unless remedied, will be the great weakness in the future (1902:96-98).

Murray asserts that Taylor's inner life reveals 'the secret source' (1902:109). He therefore draws on Geraldine's story of the CIM (cf. 2.3.1 above) to delineate lessons on Taylor's exercises in faith, positing them as foundational to the power of prayer in the CIM.<sup>89</sup> Identifying 'the missionary problem [as] a personal one', he commends Taylor for bringing Christians 'into personal contact with God' (1902:111-114). Taylor is an exemplar of this 'personal element' precisely because it is linked to his intensely personal training in fellowship with God (1902:111-114). Murray's emphasis on the power of prayer also underscores the third stage of prayer in the life of the CIM, which Taylor describes in relation to the filling of the Holy Spirit (The Introduction, in Guinness [1892]/1977:xii).<sup>90</sup> His emphasis on the Holy Spirit as the source of power is a topic that requires further research, in order to understand the religious influences which inspired Taylor's openness to the Holy Spirit in later years.

### 2.5.2 *From Faith to Faith* (Bacon 1984)

Bacon's doctoral thesis explores Taylor's influence on the modern faith missions movement, which extended well into the 20th century. Four historical influences are delineated in Part II, namely: Taylor's model for missionary outreach; significance as father of the faith missions movement; impact on the student missions movement; and contribution through conferences and publications (1984:79-129). Taylor's influence on the Christian world and missiology in the 20th century (Part III) is attributed primarily to three factors: the 'impact of biographic materials', including its popular use in seminaries; the 'utilization of Taylor's missiological principles', such as faith and finance, interdenominational membership, and the use of laymen and women; and 'key factors', delineated as Taylor's balance of qualities, pioneer model, and

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<sup>88</sup> Though Murray did not attend the conference, he was asked to publish a report on the conference, entitled *The Key to the Missionary Problem* (1902).

<sup>89</sup> Not reviewed here on the topic of prayer is Murray's chapter on the faith of George Müller and Hudson Taylor (1998); and Kibor's article, 'The Power of Prayer: A Case Study of Hudson Taylor' (2000).

<sup>90</sup> The three stages of deepening prayer in the life of the mission which Taylor delineates are cited in Chapter 4 of the current research (cf. 4.1), namely: trusting God in prayer for *pecuniary* needs, *fellow-workers* and *open doors*; second, abiding in Christ and finding *spiritual need* all met; and third, and more recently, a renewed infilling and refilling with the Holy Spirit (The Introduction, in Guinness ([1892]/1977:xii).

spiritual life (1984:130-156). An overarching point worth noting is that Taylor was not only focused on China; he also ‘stimulated Christians at large to the possibilities of the Christian life’; hence Bacon’s assertion that ‘[t]his universal dimension of Taylor’s ministry accounts considerably for his impact still today’ (1984:156).

This ‘universal dimension’ is elaborated by four ‘Abiding Principles for Missions’ (in Part IV), namely: vision, faith, commitment, and prayer (1984:169-187). The brief discussion on ‘The Faith/Rest Principle’ (1984:177-180) refers to the exchanged life, which ‘dramatically changed’ Taylor’s life and ministry, and ‘one from which he never apparently looked back’ (1984:177-178). Citing the Centenary Conference of Protestant Missions in London, in 1888, where Taylor advocated for a ‘higher standard of the Holy Ghost power’ (1984:177), his transformative experience of 1869 evidently had profound missiological implications. In this international conference setting, he described his poor spiritual condition over many years of mission work in China as ‘often hungry than well-fed, oftener thirsty than overflowing’ (1984:177); hence the need for the filling of the Holy Spirit. The key point regarding the ‘faith/rest principle’ is that through personal struggle, Taylor realised that ‘missionary life, or even the Christian life, cannot be lived without total dependence upon the indwelling Christ’ (1984:177).

Though Bacon mentions the popularity of *Union and Communion* among Taylor’s devotional writings (1984:128), he fails to apply it to the faith/rest principle. It is surprising given the fact in Taylor’s commentary on the Song of Songs, he addresses the common problem of habitual unrest, the need to abide in Christ, and bearing fruit that abides. As this research suggests, *Union and Communion* offers abiding principles for mission. Moreover, it serves as a potential bridge between the disciplines of spirituality and missiology, and between the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. In this regard, Taylor’s emphasis on abiding in Christ is highly relevant for contemporary mission studies:

It is easy in the study of mission theory to lose sight of the absolute necessity for effectiveness or fruitfulness to flow out of abiding in Christ rather than simply correct strategy. The spiritual life of the missionary can never be separated from the task of missions, and is done so only at the loss of power and abiding results (Bacon 1984:179).

### 2.5.3 *The Imperial Horizons of British Protestant Missions, 1880-1914* (Porter 2003)

In Pfister’s chapter, ‘Rethinking Mission in China: James Hudson Taylor and Timothy Richard’ (2003:183-212), he advocates a rethink of approaches which posit Hudson Taylor and

Timothy Richard (1845-1919) as polar opposites<sup>91</sup> (conservative and liberal) in their religious sentiments and cultural interests (2003:183).<sup>92</sup> He suggests that Taylor's 'minimalist' approach focused primarily on evangelism and reaching the common people, devoting less emphasis to intellectual aspects of Chinese culture, etc. (2003:186, 196, 199, 208, 210).<sup>93</sup> In contrast, Richard's 'maximalist' approach had advantages with the intellectuals and elite; however, his 'open-ended approach' to various religious and political leaders led to 'anomalous results'; and, ironically, 'may have been more hindrance than help toward his ultimate goal of Christian witness leading to personal conversion' (2003:211). On their individual personalities and missionary approaches in China, Pfister notes that they demonstrate tendencies which to this day have contentious implications for a theology of mission:

Taylor was a reserved man attracted to an ascetic lifestyle and the mystical confirmation of experienced fellowship with Christ; Richard was more practical, driven by detailed plans for the total renovation of the Chinese people under a broad division of the kingdom of God in Christ (2003:207).

Taylor's emphasis of 'mystical union of Christ and the believer' gave new spiritual meaning on biblical passages to thousands who heard him speak, and was a form of spiritual life that had a practical implication for reaching "China's millions", asserts Pfister (2003:208). Yet, no reference is made to *Union and Communion* with regard to his teaching on union with Christ. Instead, in a footnote, Pfister raises the issue of eschatology in Taylor's writing on the Song in *China's Millions*, suggesting that more work is necessary for a fuller assessment of Taylor's premillennial views (2003:208). Also based on *China's Millions*,<sup>94</sup> he highlights the practical outworking of Taylor's spirituality in mission praxis. First, Jesus, the Incarnate Word is exemplary for meeting human beings in their most basic needs. Second, following Paul, Taylor's overriding emphasis on preaching "JESUS CHRIST, and Him *crucified*" took priority over intellectual and philosophical debate. Third, eschatological urgency resulted in the emphasis on 'practice' rather on than 'theory' or 'study'. Fourth, his ministerial vision for common people was uninfluenced by the prevalent intellectual trends (2003:208). In the final

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<sup>91</sup> The contrast between Taylor and Richard is a topic of interest, taken up by Latourette ([1929]/2009:387); Barr (1972:92-101, 161-169, 196); Walls (2002:236-258); Yao (2003:32-36); Ng (2012); Doyle (2012a, 2012b); etc.

<sup>92</sup> Pfister suggests that it would be more accurate to view their missiological positions as 'correctives to the broader assumptions behind missionary institutions in the 1870s and 1880s', as both their strategies provided 'correctives focused on different spheres of Qing society rather than contradictory methods' (2003:187-204). For the purpose of pioneering new ventures in China, the CIM was established 'as an alternative to the standard foreign mission structures of the day' (2003:190).

<sup>93</sup> Doyle's two-part paper (2012a; 2012b) critiques incomplete views of Taylor's evangelism, while Bacon clarifies the rationale for his evangelistic strategy, in the face of much criticism (1984:17-22).

<sup>94</sup> Pfister cites three articles from *China's Millions*, namely: 'Lessons from the incarnation' (April 1885:39-40); 'Apostolic example' (June 1885:63-64); and 'Self-denial versus self-assertion' (September 1885:107-108).

analysis, Taylor's form of Christian spirituality, 'catalyzed immense transformations among missionary-minded English-speaking Christians in the 1880s and 1890s'; and formed 'patterns still visible in many missionary societies and in the Chinese Protestant traditions to this day' (2003:184).

#### 2.5.4 *China's Millions: The China Inland Mission and Late Qing Society, 1832-1905* (Austin 2007)

Given Austin's background in the old CIM, and as a child during the reluctant exodus from China in 1950-1951 (2007:xviii), he is a fierce critic of hagiographic missionary biographies. For example, he contends that Geraldine Guinness Taylor portrays her father-in-law as a 'heroic character' bathed in a 'sanitized message'; consequently, historians have needed to pierce through her 'pietistic veil' (2019:123). Moreover, it is her writings that have shaped Taylor into 'one of the most famous missionaries of all time, the ideal pioneer missionary for the nineteenth century' (2019:123, 121). Taylor himself though was gifted in storytelling, which personally contributed to his popularity in 19th and 20th century evangelicalism:

Taylor was one of the great storytellers of the Victorian age, who could take a simple poignant anecdote that showed how God was working in his own life, and amplify and refine it until it gained mythic proportions. His 'Brighton vision' became the most enduring stereotype of the heathen Chinese well into the twentieth century (Austin 2007:xxiii).

For example, Taylor 'invented' the term "*China's Millions*", based on his view of '[a] million a month in China are dying without God' (2007:xxiii). It is this title that Austin adopts for his major work (2007), not as an historical account, nor as 'a corporate story' of the CIM (2007:xviii). Instead, he uses the CIM as 'a prism' through which to examine the following:

How did nineteenth century British evangelicalism feed into twentieth-century American fundamentalism, and eventually into worldwide Protestant patterns of the twenty-first century? And to pose the question in a deceptively simple fashion, how did evangelical Christianity become Chinese? (2007:xviii).

It is beyond the scope of this review to delineate Austin's methods and conclusions, as it would also include a consideration of his other related works (1986; 1998; 2000; 2019).<sup>95</sup> Suffice it

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<sup>95</sup> Topics include: Taylor's visit to Canada in the summer of 1888, which inspired large scale recruitment of Canadians for mission work in China, and marked the beginning of Canada's overseas missionary enterprise (1986:3-20); the CIM's Transatlantic development and its bond with North American fundamentalism (1998); the CIM's non-solicitation policy which became influential in 'faith mission' policies (2000:217-218); and Geraldine Guinness Taylor's literary role as one of 'the last of the great Victorian hagiographers' and an 'especially prominent female voice among the patriarchs of evangelical history writing' (2019:121).

to mention that he pays specific attention to ‘the footsoldiers of the CIM’ (2007:xxiv),<sup>96</sup> and thereby shifts the ‘spotlight away from the founder to the “pigtailed tribe” of [Taylor’s] “helpers” (as he called them)’ (2007:xxiv). Austin focuses on three generations of missionaries to China from Great Britain and North America, within the historical timeframes of 1851-1865; 1875-1888; and 1888-1900. Echoing Bunyan’s *Pilgrims Progress*,<sup>97</sup> his narrative portrays Taylor as ‘the Pilgrim’ and the CIMers as ‘the Pilgrim Band’; this is apt in locating Taylor’s unique 19th century pilgrimage, which began as a ‘child of the Methodist revival’ and eventually led to the influential shaping of evangelicalism in Qing China.<sup>98</sup> The historical detail provided is informative, including background on the industrial town of Barnsley; the impetus of the great revivals on mission; Taylor’s ‘visions’ at the beginning of each stage of the three generations; the religious backgrounds of the CIM recruits; the leadership role of Pastor Hsi in Shanxi, and his collaborative work with the CIM in treating opium addicts; etc.

With respect to the section entitled ‘The Exchanged Life’ (2007:186-188),<sup>99</sup> Austin’s timeframe of ‘The Second Generation’ (1875-1888) does not correspond chronologically with Taylor’s transformative moment in 1869. Nevertheless, his elucidation of the ‘new religious climate’ in Britain (1870-1876) provides an understanding of the spirituality of ‘The Second Generation’<sup>100</sup> of CIM missionaries. Significant is the ‘new spiritual language’ that emerged from ‘the confluence of spiritual influences, such as holiness teachings, Keswick conventions, Mildmay conferences, Moody’s revival gatherings, etc. Within this new spiritual milieu, Taylor sought to ‘institutionalize Keswick piety in the CIM’ (2007:187), precisely because the second generation of missionaries were receptive to his teaching of union, abiding, soul rest, etc. The new climate also provided Taylor with a wider Christian audience for his teaching on the exchanged life, the Song of Songs, etc., and a market for the sale of his popular writings.

Austin briefly discusses Keswick teaching and the controversy surrounding ‘resting faith’, which resulted in Taylor being ‘often criticized for his dreamy spirituality and

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<sup>96</sup> Austin depicts the CIM tribe in ‘the biblical, if not modern sense’ as ‘a peculiar people;’ and the CIM as ‘a thicket unto itself;’ moreover, he describes it as ‘a “mixed multitude” from almost every evangelical church in Christendom’, and delineates quite humourously the various denominations represented (2007:xxv-xxvi).

<sup>97</sup> The Christian classic *Pilgrim’s Progress* was important reading in Taylor’s childhood (Taylor & Taylor ([1911]/2005:64). Its author John Bunyan is thus an apt reference point for Taylor’s life, writings, and spiritual journey (cf. Broomhall 1931:11-13; Broomhall 2018).

<sup>98</sup> Austin’s conclusion (2007) is worth reading, alongside other critical perspectives by Wigram (2018) and Pfister (2003) regarding Taylor and the CIM’s influence on evangelicalism in China.

<sup>99</sup> Though Austin states that Taylor experienced ‘the second blessing’ as early as 1864, through Canon William Pennefather when he opened the Mildmay Institute (2007:187), his source of information is not specified.

<sup>100</sup> This ‘Second Generation’ is not to be confused with the ‘Second Generation’ in Chang *et al.* (2005:93-98). The latter refers to the children of senior CIM missionaries who also joined the mission family. The most notable of several families are the Taylors, the Broomhalls, and the Guinneses.

detachment from the mundane world' (2007:187). However, in his defense, Austin asserts that '[n]o one ... could accuse him of lacking sinew or "manliness". Indeed his passivity was his power; prayer and devotions were the answer to life's troubling questions ...' (2007:187). Without elaboration on the meaning of 'passivity', the implication may be deduced from one of Taylor's favourite hymns, "Jesus, I am resting, resting, in the joy of what Thou art" (2007:187). On the positive side, Keswick teachings effected a turn from the Victorian Christianity of a 'ceaselessly striving, seeking faith' to a 'resting faith' (2007:187). The significance of the Exchanged Life and the influence of Keswick teaching on Taylor and the CIM's collective spirituality will be addressed in the course of the research.

Several renowned mission scholars affirm Austin's research (2007:xviii); for example, Noll uses this 'sprightly and well-researched account' as a teaching text on the subject World Christianity (2014:183-184, 159).<sup>101</sup> Doyle affirms Austin's insights on 'the theological and sociological factors involved in the expansion and composition of the CIM and similar evangelical organizations'; likewise, 'the sociological and religious background to the spread of Christianity among Shanxi's peasants' (2016). He also commends the 'starkly somber narrative - "warts and all" - of a wide variety of missionaries, some of them quite idiosyncratic' (2016). However, he concludes that Austin's work 'fails as history' for several reasons: it is 'revisionist history that is almost fatally flawed by a profound prejudice'; a 'misinterpretation and at times even misrepresentation' of source material and facts; imposing 'impure motives' on key figures; and usually a negative depiction of the mission (2016). Moreover, Austin's comments seem to suggest that the sources 'have been tainted, doctored, or destroyed' and that the leaders of the CIM sought to prevent the truth from being told (2016).

### 2.5.5 *The Bible and Mission in Faith Perspective* (Wigram 2007)

Wigram's doctoral research focuses on Taylor's 'use of the Bible in his personal life and within the mission of the CIM' (2007:7). In addition to laying the foundation for the role of the Bible in Taylor's spirituality (2007:79-115), worldview (2007:116-141), and missionary teaching and preaching (2007:143-192), he explores the religious, cultural, familial, and personal

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<sup>101</sup> Several errors occur in Austin's work (2007). First, he names the current OMF General Director as 'Dr Timothy Fung', which should read 'Dr Patrick Fung' (2007:xix). Second, Doyle (2016) comments that his reference to the Taylor 'dynasty' is misleading, as Taylor's modus operandi was in stark contrast to the rule of Chinese emperors; additionally, neither Taylor's son nor his grandson succeeded him as general directors of the CIM. Third, in Austin's chapter (2019:122), he dates Dr James Hudson Taylor III's tenure as OMF General Director from 1999-2014. In fact, Dr 'Jim Taylor', along with his wife Leone, served in this position in Singapore from 1980-1991 (Chang *et al.* 2005:124); and, for the record, died in Hong Kong in 2009.

influences which shaped Taylor's spirituality.<sup>102</sup> He argues that hagiographical approaches tend to neglect the contributing factors of the 19th century religious context which shaped Taylor's spirituality (2007:246); thus he draws on contemporary historians such as Bebbington, Stanley, Austin, and to some extent Alfred Broomhall, to elucidate the cultural forces unleashed by the Enlightenment and particularly Romanticism (2007:243, 246).<sup>103</sup>

Wigram considers Taylor a 'seminal' and controversial figure in mission history (2007:1); a 'unique figure in his generation' (2007:192); and one who 'took the central evangelical principle of gospel-based mission further than any other evangelical of his day' (2007:250-251). Noteworthy are Taylor's innovative approaches that challenged the status quo. First, he 'forged the CIM with a different set of theological and philosophical presuppositions from those that informed earlier British Protestant missions' (2007:7). Second, his 'radical spirituality' 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', thus cutting through 'conventional practice and standards in the Church to place mission to China as a high priority' (2007:250-251). Third, he pioneered 'new expressions of spiritual experience applied to mission' – not toward 'a more relaxed spirituality', but to radical trust in God, an acceptance of the sovereignty of God over all circumstances, consecration to God, reliance upon God's faithfulness, etc.; these expressions would have been considered by Taylor as 'the norm for Christian life' (2007:246).

Though Wigram's work lacks adequate definitions on mysticism, he affirms the role of mystical traditions and mystical influences on Taylor,<sup>104</sup> and clarifies that Taylor's allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs, which aimed at reaching the spiritual meaning of a text,<sup>105</sup> is the rationale for his experiential/mystical emphasis in *Union and Communion*.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, on the Exchanged Life experience as a defining moment,<sup>107</sup> Wigram locates the relevant themes, sermons, and teaching derived from John 15 on abiding, rest, and union.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Wigram acknowledges the relationship between personal spirituality and missionary theology, and is cognisant of important considerations that are neglected in traditional research on missions, namely: spiritual formation, personal religious experiences, prayer and devotional practices, missionary ascetics, etc. (2007:1-7).

<sup>103</sup> Doyle endorses Wigram's 'impressive familiarity with Taylor's preaching and teaching corpus' (2014b); however, he considers the weakest part to be his discussion on the role of the Enlightenment and Romanticism in shaping Taylor's reading and application of the Bible (2014a, 2014b).

<sup>104</sup> Wigram (2007:43, 54, 77, 95, 100, 114-117, 140, 244-246).

<sup>105</sup> Wigram (2007:57, 77, 94, 98, 109, 129, 136, 140, 151, 153, 186, 247).

<sup>106</sup> Wigram (2007:98, 117, 136, 151).

<sup>107</sup> Wigram (2007:60, 91-93, 95-97, 104, 108-109, 113, 171-174, 191, 248).

<sup>108</sup> Wigram (2007:104-113, 139, 140, 145, 171-172, 245).

The downside of Wigram's writing is that the numerous inferences to the mystical (including the Song of Songs, *Union and Communion*, the Exchanged Life, abiding, etc.), are scattered throughout the work. Therefore, a more concentrated mystical focus, accompanied by specific methodologies from the discipline of spirituality, would complement Wigram's work, which this study will undertake.

#### 2.5.6 *Builders of the Chinese Church* (Doyle 2015a)<sup>109</sup>

Doyle's chapter on 'J. Hudson Taylor: Advocate for China's Inland Millions' (2015b:101-121)<sup>110</sup> provides a succinct biographical sketch of Taylor, and includes aspects of spiritual intimacy and spiritual vitality, which are discernible in three stages. First, in his early years in China, while working alongside the godly William Burns, the younger Taylor was left on his own much of the time, as Burns would engage more independently in evangelism. As a single man with 'intense desire to love others and to be loved' (2015b:106), Taylor needed to learn to find satisfaction through intimacy with God, including his emotional and physical needs.

Second, toward mid-life, Doyle interprets the 1869 experience as Taylor's eyes and heart were opened 'to the possibility of enjoying continuous intimacy with Jesus Christ simply through faith' (2015b:110). The transformative effect is described as 'remarkable peace and joy in the midst of otherwise crushing trials'; 'calmness and cheerfulness even when pressed beyond limits'; 'peace' when those around him were worried; 'a quiet joy that would not be quenched' even 'when his weakness and illness rendered him almost immobile'; and a 'resilience' that 'surprised even those closest to him' (2015b:110). Even in the tragic loss of loved ones in 1870, described in the section 'Deep Valleys, Green Pastures' (2015b:110-111), Taylor turned to Christ 'constantly for a fresh draught of the "living waters" that were promised in John 7:37-39' (2015b:111).

Third, in the final years of Taylor's life and ministry, when the CIM had become 'an interdenominational, international organization and the largest Protestant mission society in China', he was in constant demand as a speaker (2015b:114-115). Taylor became the embodiment of his message, to the extent that 'everywhere, people were deeply moved by the evident presence of God in his life' (2015b:115). His popularity, strengths, giftedness, and the

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<sup>109</sup> This work, edited by Doyle (2015a) enumerates various forms of contextualization in China by other historical figures, such as James Legge; W.A.P. Martin; Karl Ludvig Reichelt; Lottie Moon; T. C. Chao; etc.

<sup>110</sup> Doyle's writings span a wide range of topics on Taylor, the CIM, and Chinese culture (2012a, 2012b; 2015a; 2015b); as well as reviews of contemporary works on similar topics (2014a; 2014b; 2016). He is the director of Global China Center (GCC), [www.globalchinacenter.org](http://www.globalchinacenter.org) and editor of its website; also the General Editor of the *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity*: <http://bdcconline.net>

‘reasons for his extraordinary influence’ are highlighted (2015b:116-117); however, several key criticisms are also delineated (2015b:114-116), which will be incorporated in this research. For example, Doyle critiques Taylor’s overemphasis on God’s work to the neglect of the family; as well as the downside of extensive travel and long separations from the family, which were acutely painful for ‘a man of powerful affection’ (2015b:114). Notwithstanding the decades of pain, illness, suffering, and criticism, Taylor’s love remained unquenchable to the very end; notably, on his final journey to China, he sparkled with ‘undiminished zeal and spiritual vitality’ (2015b:115). Citing Griffith John’s commendation of Taylor, that ‘[h]e lived in Christ and Christ lived in him ... His heart was full of love’ (2015b:116-117), this concluding epitaph is an apt mystical expression of Taylor’s leitmotif of union and communion.

## 2.6 Chinese authors’ works, in English (1945-2016)

The day before Taylor’s death in Changsha, he addressed a group of Chinese friends who were eager to meet him, as they had just read his *Retrospect* (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:593-596). Furthermore, a young Chinese evangelist and his wife who had also read it, had travelled from an outstation to meet the ‘Venerable Pastor’. Having just missed him in life, their outpouring of love and admiration at his deathbed evinced a commitment to follow *Lao Muh-si* even after death ([1918]/2005:593). Against this backdrop, the few works reviewed in this section provide a glimpse into Taylor’s impact on Chinese authors, from the mid-20th century and into the first two decades of the 21st century.

### 2.6.1 *The Normal Christian Life* (Nee 1958)

Watchman Nee 倪柝聲, Ní Tuòshēng, (1903–1972), was one of several Chinese leaders who emerged in the 1950s.<sup>111</sup> In his commentary on the Song of Songs (1945), he cites Taylor’s *Union and Communion* and adopts a similar interpretation with regard to the daughters of Jerusalem ([1945]/1993:15). More importantly, in *The Normal Christian Life* (1958:51-52),<sup>112</sup> Nee refers to Taylor’s ‘longstanding problem’ of how to live “in Christ”; although he knew that he needed to ‘be found in Christ’ and to have ‘the life of Christ flowing out through him’, he ‘felt that he had not got it’ (1958:51-52). The problem he faced was that ‘[t]he more he tried

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<sup>111</sup> Nee’s contribution to Chinese Church history is discussed in Lyall (1973); Covell (1986); and Yu (2000:112-140). On Nee’s spirituality, Holder suggests that Wu’s work (2012) is ‘an excellent example of the best interdisciplinary work now being done in the field of Christian spirituality’ (The Foreword, in Wu 2012:xi-xii). His ‘thorough and judicious analysis’, which draws on McIntosh’s insights on mystical theology, would help scholars to locate Nee ‘in the canon of important spiritual theologians of the modern era’ (2012:xi-xii).

<sup>112</sup> In 1938, Nee traveled to Europe (cf. Woodbridge 2019:64-71), and the messages that he presented there were later published as *The Normal Christian Life*.

to get in the more he found himself slipping out, so to speak, until one day light dawned, revelation came and he saw' (1958:51-52). Based on the finished work of Christ, revelation refers to the moment his eyes were opened, when he discovered the secret that Jesus *is* the Vine (1958:52); and, thus, through the exchanged life experience, he entered into 'the normal Christian life'. The revelatory experience is described 'as though something which had indeed been true all the time had now suddenly become true in a new way to him personally' (1958:52); in other words, the newfound knowledge, wonder, and joy of being in Christ.

Nee then describes the effortlessness of being 'in Christ' by way of the following illustration: 'Think of the bewilderment of trying to get into a room in which you already are! Think of the absurdity of asking to be put in! If we recognize the fact that we are in, we make no effort to enter' (1958:52). This illustration also echoes the style and simplicity of Taylor's expositions on soul rest and abiding in Christ (cf. Chapter 4 of this research).<sup>113</sup>

#### 2.6.2 *The Perspective of James Hudson Taylor on the Work of the Holy Spirit* (Kan 2003)

Kan's M.Div. research explores Taylor's perspective on the Holy Spirit, through a discussion of significant events in Taylor's life and work, as well as the significance and impact of the work of the Holy Spirit on his life and ministry (2003:39-51). Ranging from 1849 to 1900, they include: conversion, 1849; ministry with the Scottish William Burns, 1855; personal Pentecost, 1869;<sup>114</sup> the Shanghai Conference, 1877 and the Ning-po Conference 1878; Conference at An-king 1882; first visit to North America to meet D.L. Moody, 1888; Council Meeting, 1891; the Keswick Convention, 1892, and the Keswick deputation, 1898-1900.

Given the particular focus on the Holy Spirit, it would have been helpful to discuss the aptness of the term 'personal Pentecost' and the spiritual impact on Taylor's ministry (2003:41-43). For example, Kan cites Taylor on the inextricable link between the Spirit's presence and divine power in missions, as follows: 'The supreme want of all missions in the present day is the manifested presence of the Holy Ghost ... I feel that it is divine power we want and not machinery!' (2003:48-49). The CIM records attest to occasions of a deep filling of the Spirit, a new empowerment for their work, prayer for an outpouring on China, an anointing on local Chinese Christians, and ambitious initiatives for an increase in missionaries for China; yet Taylor was also acutely aware that 'the evil spirit is active when the Spirit of God works

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<sup>113</sup> Though Nee was influenced by Brethren theology, the exchanged life theology, and connections with Keswick and the Holiness movement, his 'extreme inward mysticism', anti-church, anti-denominational, and 'pietistic, otherworldly' views (Covell 1986:196-200) are not synonymous with Taylor.

<sup>114</sup> The correct date is September 4, 1869 (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:172), not October 17, 1869.

mightily' (2003:70-71). Taylor's contact with Moody is worth noting, that it was 'a spiritual oasis to his own soul', and the visit was to 'learn more about the Holy Spirit's workings in this man's life' (2003:46, citing Miller 1948:118). Kan correctly highlights the role of the Spirit in the last thirty years of Taylor's life; and, as confirmed by Steer's observation, 'the Holy Spirit features particularly prominently in his writing and recorded addresses' (1995:91).<sup>115</sup>

Kan's overall summary and conclusions are valid. First, Taylor was a practical missionary without systematic theological training; hence a perspective on the work of the Holy Spirit that is not necessarily systematic (2003:72). Second, experiences of the Spirit – presence, outpouring, filling, power, etc. – were less about the actual experiences and more about the Holy Spirit (2003:75). Third, the CIM reports reflect the emphasis on 'the impacts of the events instead of the form of the phenomena' – a recognition that forms of expression vary (2003:76). Fourth, for Taylor, the filling and outpouring of the Spirit is tied in with obedience and is dependent on the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit to build up the church and to preach the Gospel (2003:76). Fifth, the Holy Spirit works in a variety of ways among different people and in different settings, which implies that experiences of the Spirit are not limited to Revival or Pentecostal 'signs and forms' (2003:76).

### 2.6.3 *Selected Factors in the Life and Ministry of Hudson Taylor Leading to Effective Ministry among Chinese in the 21st Century* (Huang 2009)

Huang's M.Th. research delineates 'timeless principles' from Taylor's *life* and *ministry* (2009:36-37) for effective ministry in the 21st century, while noting several changes in China since the 19th century;<sup>116</sup> notably, financial success, ease of travel, accessibility of various versions of the Chinese bible, proliferation of Christian literature and media, the tremendous growth in the Christian population, and the increasing need for Christian education, theological education, and sound doctrine (2009:2-5). Identifying Taylor's 'priority' in ministry as 'putting the Lord before the family', and 'fulfilling the cost of discipleship (Luke 14:25-33), Huang also acknowledges the great price that he paid for his commitment to mission in China (2009:17). It would be helpful had Huang located these insights within the particular context of the 19th century British Protestant missionary mindset.

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<sup>115</sup> Steer's chronology records 1892 as the need for the 'manifested presence of the Holy Spirit' (1995:146).

<sup>116</sup> Huang briefly addresses the perception of Christianity by the Chinese historically (2009:34-35), namely: the declension of China against the prowess of Western science, technology, industry, commerce; the lucrative opium trade and unequal treaties forced upon China; colonial expansion and commercial privileges; Western military aggression and national/ethnic humiliation of China; missionaries and gun-boat policy, etc. (2009:34).

His choice of Taylor as an example of the Christian virtues of sacrifice, humility and courage is apt, based on his brief discussion on the Chinese cultural system of ‘honor and shame’ – the deeply rooted value of gaining honor through saving face and maintaining harmonious relationships. Of the four notable lessons from Taylor’s *ministry* (2009:36-37), ‘creativity and risk-taking’ is amplified by Huang’s assertion: ‘If risk-taking is not encouraged, creativity is not welcomed’ (2009:38). Creativity and innovation are stunted when Christian leaders are afraid of shaming self, family, and church members (2009:33). Furthermore, saving face neglects improvement, discourages confrontation, and might eventually hinder spiritual growth and genuine fellowship among believers (2009:34). Over and above a cognitive understanding of the ‘dark side’ of this cultural value, ‘humility’ may be an ultimate solution, as it is contrary to self-seeking and denotes the idea of service with sacrifice (2009:34).<sup>117</sup> Huang challenges the shame of failing, the conservatism in many Chinese church ministries, and the lack of motivation in Christian leaders to change.

The cost of discipleship and Taylor’s commitment to mission is also briefly discussed in the context of the People’s Republic of China’s ‘one-child policy’,<sup>118</sup> which has given rise to a ‘Me generation’ of spoiled, self-centred, and self-indulgent little emperors (2009:35). The church’s responsibility is to educate Christians so that biblical teaching transforms their value system; in this regard, he highlights the negative effects of the cultural value of collectivism, family pressure on young peoples’ choice of profession, the pursuit of money and materialism, etc. In addition to Taylor himself as role model,<sup>119</sup> Huang also notes the significant role of Taylor’s ‘devoted parents’ and ‘supporting wives’; collectively they embodied qualities of humility, faith, prudence, self-denial, and simplicity (2009:36-37).

#### 2.6.4 *A Passion for a Greater Vision—the Role of Leslie T. Lyall in the History of the China Inland Mission/Overseas Missionary Fellowship* (So 2016)

A chapter on ‘The Passion, Vision and Strategy of Hudson Taylor’ (2016:64-106) is included in So’s doctoral thesis (2016), where he describes Taylor’s ‘greatest gift’ as ‘his ability to inspire ... and to pass on his passion and vision to the succeeding generation of leaders’

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<sup>117</sup> In the context of Taiwan, to deal with the hierarchy of senior-junior pastoral status in a co-laboring ministry, changes for Christian leaders would include confrontation and correction (Huang 2009:33).

<sup>118</sup> The one-child policy introduced in 1979 by the Chinese Government, was replaced in October 2015 by a universal two-child policy, according to: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5944611/>

<sup>119</sup> Huang identifies two lessons to avoid from Taylor’s *ministry* (2009:39-40), namely: ‘widespread rather than concentration’ and ‘recruiting the theologically uneducated’ (2009:39). So (2016) delineates correctives to Taylor’s methodologies and policies applied by succeeding generations of CIM leaders; for example, Hoste, his successor, developed the emphases of discipleship of believers and of local church ministries (2016:80-101).

(2016:64-65). So describes this passion specifically as ‘the daring spirit after the “type of Hudson Taylor”’ and regards it as ‘the unique characteristic of the CIM mission force’ (2016:64-65). Taylor not only inspired Western missionaries, faith missions, and local Chinese believers; over time, he also inspired hundreds of Chinese leaders including Wang Mingdao, David Yang and Watchman Nee who made great sacrifices for the establishment of the Chinese Church.<sup>120</sup> On the basis of this enduring influence, ‘the vision, passion and the daring spirit of Hudson Taylor’s type is one of the keys to the success of the CIM’ (2016:77).

Success for Taylor, however, involved personal cost and a high price, namely: busy speaking engagements; long separations from family; being worn down physically, mentally and spiritually; etc. (2016:67). In the face of internal struggles and external pressure the transformative power of God was operative, as So attests in the following important assertion: ‘Paradoxically, it was in [Taylor’s] weaknesses that we see him emerging as a spiritual giant who pressed on and grew the CIM into the largest and most influential mission in the history of Christian missions’ (2016:67).<sup>121</sup> To underscore this point, Paul’s paradoxical expressions (2 Cor 4:7-15) are aptly referenced, that ‘tribulation and weakness’ were met with ‘triumph and inner strength’ (2016:65).

So draws striking parallels between Taylor and Paul, arguing that it was the apostle Paul (not the Methodists, Brethren, George Müller, etc.) who had the most influence on the shaping of Taylor’s life and ministry (2016:73). Delineating the influence of Pauline theology (2016:74) and drawing on Allen’s analysis of Paul’s strategy (2016:80),<sup>122</sup> he views Taylor’s strategy as ‘not only innovative but brilliant’ (2016:77-80). In contrast to forerunners such as the Nestorians and the Jesuits, his strategy was characterised by several factors: ‘evangelization from the bottom up’; ‘distanced himself from politics’; ‘abandoned the capital, the court, and the elite class’; and focused instead on ‘the masses in inland China, indeed on the evangelization of the whole of China’ (2016:80).<sup>123</sup> As a complement to So’s Pauline emphasis,

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<sup>120</sup> Apart from the ‘impact of denominationalism through Wesleyan theology and Pentecostalism’, Yu argues that the Brethren Movement was the ‘biggest single influence, whether directly or indirectly on the Chinese Church scene’; he adds that this influence ‘was mediated mainly through Taylor and the CIM’ (2000:32).

<sup>121</sup> So notes that in 1868 (the year of the Yangzhou riot), ‘Taylor became more determined to expand the CIM ministry, and issued a call for a hundred new missionaries that year’ (2016:66); in fact, it was only in 1886 that ‘the prayer for a hundred’ went forth (Guinness [1894]/1977:465; Chang *et al.* 2005:86).

<sup>122</sup> On Allen’s *Missionary Methods: St Paul’s or Ours?* (1962:12), Wigram states that unlike Allen, Taylor did not draw on the teaching and example of the apostle Paul to fortify his thinking on the subject of self-supporting local churches, and therefore critiques Taylor’s lack of adequate reflection on Paul’s ecclesiology (2007:241).

<sup>123</sup> Pfister’s chapter (2003) and Wigram’s article (2018) discuss the limitations of Taylor’s strategy; while Ng asserts that Taylor ‘failed’ in his approach to Christianise China (2012).

a later chapter in this study will elucidate Paul's missionary spirituality<sup>124</sup> in more depth, which includes the journey motif, and living the tensions and paradoxes of missionary life.

## 2.7 Spirituality works (1978-2016)<sup>125</sup>

In the selected works to be reviewed below, the authors reflect the exemplary nature of Taylor's spirituality as it was expressed and embodied in missions, underscoring that his personal spirituality is inextricably linked to his missionary spirituality; hence, the two dimensions are to be held in creative conversation.

### 2.7.1 *Spirituality for Mission* (Reilly 1978)

Based on a study of eight missionaries representing Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions over the centuries, Reilly, a Jesuit author, delineates the 'constant marks of missionary spirituality', which resonate with descriptions of Taylor reviewed thus far:

a deep, personal love of God and of Jesus Christ, a sense of the need which others have for Jesus Christ, union with God, personal holiness, the witness of Christian living, profound trust in God and the boldness, courage and perseverance which come from such trust, joy in the Lord, loving service and humility (1978:117-132; 1980:441).

Specific to Taylor's missionary spirituality (1978:102-110), Reilly states that it was rooted in prayer and the Bible: 'Above all', he was 'a man of prayer and self-abnegation, prayer which was deeply rooted in constant Scripture reading, and self-abnegation which accepted willingly the hardships of mission life' (1978:108). Reilly delineates two dominant characteristics of Taylor's spirituality: 'faith and trust in God and in his faithfulness, and a felt sense of the presence of God and union with Christ' (1978:108). On the second point, his 'sensible experience of the presence of God', three aspects are highlighted: God as 'a living, bright Reality' which caused Taylor great joy and a desire for service; 'special appreciation' for the Song of Songs as an expression of his personal relationship with the Lord; and the sense of God's presence was a constant in all stages of Taylor's missionary life (1978:109). Reilly does not mention *Union and Communion*, the Song of Songs' tradition, or the mystical elements of the biblical love song. In fact, he offers no definition of the term 'mystical', neither does

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<sup>124</sup> A key text on Paul's missionary spirituality is *A Spirituality of the Road* (Bosch 1979).

<sup>125</sup> Taylor features as a prominent historical figure, albeit briefly, alongside other historical figures in three spirituality sources not reviewed here, namely: *The Story of Christian Spirituality: Two Thousand Years, from East to West* (Mursell 2001); *Water from a Deep Well: Christian Spirituality from Early Martyrs to Modern Missionaries* (Sittser 2007); and *Spirituality in Mission: Embracing the Lifelong Journey* (Amalraj, et al. 2018).

‘mysticism’ appear in his ‘Index of Subjects’ (1978:253-254). Nevertheless, his insight on ‘the exchanged life’ is helpful, viewing it as ‘a spiritual phenomenon’, when Taylor’s ‘mystical awareness of God’s presence was further deepened’ (1978:109). He suggests that Taylor’s intimate knowledge of the Vine was ‘the same mystical insight which possessed Paul – no longer I, but Christ in me’ (1978:109-110), though this comparison requires further analysis. The overwhelming effect was ‘a greater awareness of the presence of God and his oneness and identification with Christ’ and ‘new energy to dedicate himself to the work of God’ (1978:110), which is evidence of the mystical element in Taylor’s missionary motivation.

A Jesuit perspective on Taylor as ‘the Loyola of Protestant Missions’ would have been helpful, since Reilly describes Ignatius’ ‘spirituality for the apostolate and for mission’ as a ‘supernatural logic and passionate love for Christ’; ‘union with God, enthusiasm for Christ, and personal holiness’, etc. (1978:75-78). Would Taylor be considered ‘a contemplative in action’, given the Jesuit’s spirituality of ‘a life of radical self-abnegation, a person of ‘profound prayer, not secluded in contemplation’; and, in all that one does, the primary motive is the “greater glory of God” or “the service of God” (1978:76)? Xavier’s missionary spirituality (1978:77-78)<sup>126</sup> also evokes a dialogue with Taylor’s, based on the following descriptions of Xavier: ‘union with the Lord in hardship and suffering for the salvation of souls to the glory of God’, and ‘profound trust in God and deep sense of dependence upon God as the source of any good he might achieve’ (1978:77-78).

### 2.7.2 *Conceived in His Soul: The Relationship between Spirituality and the Practice of Mission Leadership as Demonstrated through the Example of J. Hudson Taylor* (Anderson 2013)

Anderson’s master’s research analyses the connection between Taylor’s ‘unique and peculiar brand of biblical spirituality’ and his ‘unique missiological leadership’ (2013:2). Delineating seven predominant factors, he suggests ‘*biblical*’ to be the primary adjective in Taylor’s spirituality (2013:64-76);<sup>127</sup> hence ‘biblical spirituality’, or ‘a spirituality informed and shaped by the Bible’ (2013:27). His research addresses the following question: ‘how does personal spirituality shape, frame and influence the way a missionary leader directs and supervises a mission?’ (2013:14). Based on Kourie’s succinct definition of spirituality, that ‘life is lived according to the ultimate values and commitments’ (2009a:158), Anderson suggests two

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<sup>126</sup> ‘If the key figure for Jesuit spirituality is Loyola, Xavier is the outstanding model for the missionary spirituality of the Jesuits’, according to Reilly (1978:77).

<sup>127</sup> Anderson describes Taylor’s spirituality based on the following factors: biblical, Christ-centred, nomadic, obedient faith, habitual discipline, suffering and sacrifice, and the ‘exchanged life’ (2013:63-76).

ultimate values and commitments by which Taylor lived, namely: ‘the vital reality of Christ in his life and the evangelization of Inland China’ (2013:28).

His analysis of Taylor’s spirituality and leadership employs a multi-disciplinary approach (2013:76-138), based on the following methodologies: Bosch’s exposition of Second Corinthians on ‘missionary spirituality’ (2013:11, 29, 41, 67, 74, 80, 91, 101-102); a ‘Spiritual Assessment’ model according to Hodge’s Framework (2013:68),<sup>128</sup> and a Leadership Assessment according to Kouzes and Posner (2013:97). Taylor’s leadership is thus assessed based on the following criteria: ‘clarified values and set the example’; ‘inspired a shared vision’; ‘challenged the process’; ‘enabled others to act’; and ‘encouraged the heart’ (2013:119-139). Learning from Taylor’s example, Anderson makes several recommendations. Most notable are the need to train current leaders in terms of spirituality and spiritual formation; help them to make connections between their own personal spirituality and their leadership style; and focus on spiritual capacity, calling, and vision, rather than merely on administrative or technical skills (2013:153). One of his key conclusions is that cultivating ‘a culture of spiritual leadership’ in missionary organisations would counterbalance the strong emphasis on administrative and technical skills.

Anderson does not explicitly link the title of his research ‘*Conceived in his Soul*’ with its contents; however, this phrase from Grattan Guinness (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:3; [1932]/1958:10, cited in 2.2.1 above), underscores the leitmotif of union and communion, and thereby resonates with this research on several levels. First, on the aspect of ‘communion’ (2013:87, 103-107), Anderson assesses Taylor’s personal relationship with ‘the Ultimate’ by focusing on habitual Bible reading and prayer; experience of the presence of God; the exchanged life, John 15; the mystical indwelling of Christ by His Spirit in believers; his use of intimate, affectionate and personal terms; holiness teachings on sanctification; a resting faith; etc. Second, citing Broomhall’s description of Taylor as a ‘true mystic of the church’ (Broomhall 1929:138), and its association with Taylor’s ‘spiritual interpretation of the Song of Solomon’, Anderson suggests that *Union and Communion* is ‘critical and revealing reading’ (2013:33). In similar vein, he views Taylor’s understanding of calling, guidance and direction as ‘esoteric, mystical or behavioral’, as it was derived from ‘a present tense speaking voice of God, ruled by the Scripture, but the specifics of which could be discerned beyond the Scriptures’ (2013:113-114). Third, on the impact of the exchanged life on Taylor’s leadership,

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<sup>128</sup> Hodge’s Spiritual Assessment focuses on the following areas: Narrative Framework (childhood tradition and childhood experiences); Affect; Behavior; Intuition; Communion; Conscience; and Cognition, which Anderson analyses in relation to Taylor’s leadership and spirituality (2013:81-114).

he led the CIM with ‘a supernatural sense of calm, dignity and faith’ through raging difficulties, trials, suffering and crises (2013:144-146). Moreover, in spite of depression and frustration, he ‘lived an example’ of the exchanged life, which was a common spirituality in the CIM (2013:144-147). The following statement is remarkable, though further analysis and comparative studies would be required to establish its validity for Taylor’s legacy:

While the CIM remains Taylor’s missiological legacy, it could be argued that his unique and (for the Victorian religious climate) ground breaking understanding of abiding in Christ and the exchanged life is his spiritual legacy (2013:75).

Finally, to assess and diagnose spirituality, Anderson poses a pertinent question for further research: ‘in light of the mystical elements of Taylor’s spirituality, should we reconsider some even more ancient roads of spiritual analysis?’ (2013:159). Citing John of the Cross, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Teresa of Avila as possible examples, he overlooks the fact that these three mystics are renowned for their writings on the Song of Songs. As this research will demonstrate, Taylor’s *Union and Communion* serves as a potential bridge between the Song of Songs’ tradition and the Protestant mystical tradition (with missional implications).

### 2.7.3 *From Holy Striving to Wholly Abiding: Mystical Transformation in James Hudson Taylor (1832–1905)* (Lam 2016)<sup>129</sup>

With the surge of interest in spirituality, mysticism, and missionary spirituality in Protestant scholarship in these early decades of the 21st century, coupled with the resurgence of studies in the Song of Songs,<sup>130</sup> my article advocates that the ground is fecund for the recovery of Taylor as a missionary cum mystic. Treating Taylor’s *Union and Communion* as a mystical text, based on his affinity with the bridal metaphors of the Song of Songs, it argues that his mysticism is the *raison d’être* for his missionary praxis; hence the suggestion that greater attention be given to the mystical dimension of Taylor’s spiritual legacy. Employing insights from the discipline of spirituality, my article on Taylor is innovative and serves as a precursor to this research. It asserts that the recognition of Taylor as a mystic within the Protestant tradition would augment his renown as ‘one of the greatest missionaries that the Church has known’ (Latourette 1929:259). Furthermore, within the Protestant evangelical community, it

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<sup>129</sup> This article is a reshaping of my paper read at the Holiness Conference in Johannesburg (May 20-23, 2015), jointly convened by the Spirituality Association of South Africa (SPIRASA) and the Society of the Study of Christian Spirituality (SSCS). It is available at: <https://hts.org.za/index.php/hts/article/view/3483>

<sup>130</sup> Lam (2015) offers ‘a spiritual direction lens to reading the Song of Songs’ by incorporating the facets of spiritual experience, new ways of reading scripture, interdisciplinary studies, etc.

would render mysticism applicable to the ‘ordinary saint’ and accessible to ‘the priesthood of all believers’.

Since Taylor’s authentic transformation effected a way of living *in the mysterium*, he presents ‘a model of holiness or saintliness that is not founded on stoicism, idealism, perfectionism or heroism, but on human brokenness transformed into the beauty, blessedness and bliss of being a bride of the divine Beloved’ (Lam 2016:6). His mystical themes speak profoundly to the contemporary overemphasis on skills and doing, often to the neglect of being-in-love. The mystical emphasis is particularly noticeable in his Exchanged Life experience of 1869, around mid-life, which effected a non-egoistic motivation, a new-found soul rest, and an intimate union with Christ. Such a transformed consciousness counteracts the allure of compensatory activism and seductive heroism in missionary service.

The article therefore suggests that the Exchanged Life was the apex of Taylor’s spiritual life. Citing several instances of ‘*holy striving*’, which characterised the early part of Taylor’s life, his second half of life manifested a self-transcending *wholly abiding* in Christ. Interpreting the apex as a ‘kairotic moment’ and ‘a unitive experience’, mystical transformation is posited as the *raison d’être* for Taylor’s intense union and communion with God (as encapsulated in his reflections on the Song of Songs, published later as *Union and Communion*). The fact that his transformation occurred within the complexities of the 19th century China missions context (of unequal treaties, conflictual political wrangling between British and Chinese authorities, the socio-religious challenges of an ancient culture of Confucian/Buddhist/Taoist interfacing, etc.), it is suggested that China was a gift to Taylor’s ‘conscious involvement in the project of life-integration through self-transcendence’<sup>131</sup> across a span of 50 years of mission service. The following open-ended question is therefore aptly posed: ‘Who/what would Hudson Taylor have become without China?’ (2016:5).

## 2.8 Conclusion

The Literature Review has surveyed a broad spectrum of secondary works on Taylor and the CIM, ranging from 1892 to 2016, and based on six categories, as follows: *biographical*; *historical*; *devotional*; *missiological*; *Chinese*; and *spirituality*. In the course of the review, the lacunae to be addressed in this research with respect to Taylor’s mystical spirituality have also been identified. A summary of the findings are delineated below.

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<sup>131</sup> One of Schneiders’ definitions of spirituality is ‘a conscious and deliberate way of living’ and ‘an ongoing project’, not simply ‘a spontaneous experience’ (2011:16).

*First, the leitmotif of union and communion* has been affirmed by various observations of the depth and richness of Taylor's inner life, and validated by ample illustrations of its outworking; notably, in the founding of the CIM and throughout its development (Taylor & Taylor [1911]/2005; [1918]/2005; [1932]/1958; 1965). Moreover, *union with Christ* as a biblical motif encapsulates the secret, power, and blessing of Taylor's life ([1932]/1958); succinctly stated, Christ lived in him, and he in Christ (Doyle 2015b). *Communion* captures his habitual intimacy with God, which spilled over into a sense of God's presence in fellowship with others. Though this leitmotif is subtly or covertly present in all the works reviewed, it is generally used in a descriptive way, rather than through an interpretive lens of the classic mystical traditions. The task of this research, therefore, is to locate the leitmotif of union and communion (and Taylor's writing on the Song of Songs) within the Western Christian mystical tradition, as it will lend credence to the recovery of Taylor as a Protestant mystic.

*Second, references to the Song of Songs and Union and Communion*, as well as its significance in Taylor's life, writings, and spiritual influence, are located mainly in the earlier CIM biographies, by Taylor & Taylor ([1911]/2005, [1918]/2005, 1965); and Broomhall (1929). Given the critique of the devotional overtones of the original biography, as enumerated in several sections of the review, Broomhall's magnum opus (2005a; 2005b) is a reliable source for verifying the accuracy of historical data in the earlier biographies; the personal context in which Taylor discovered, expounded, and wrote on the Song of Songs; and the authenticity of works such as *Union and Communion* ([1894]/1931); *A Retrospect* ([1894a]/2006); *Unfailing Springs* (1902); etc. Contemporary scholarship is admirable in their elucidation of the broader aspects of Taylor's writing on the Song, namely: spiritual traditions, theological positions, biblical hermeneutics, eschatological views, and missiological implications (Pfister 2003; Dorsey 2006; Wigram 2007). This review has identified works which fail to include *Union and Communion* in their collation of Taylor's abiding principles, spiritual legacy, and timeless principles (Steer 1995; Chang *et al.* 2005; Huang 2009). In contrast, the acknowledgement of the significance of the Song of Songs in Taylor's intimate fellowship with God (Reilly 1978; Pfister 2003; Wigram 2007; Anderson 2013; Doyle 2015b) underscores the timeliness of this research, and the value of a concentrated mystical approach.

*Third, the Exchanged Life* as a transformative event (dated September 4, 1869) has also been termed 'Hudson Taylor's personal Pentecost' (Broomhall 1929), and his entrance into 'the normal Christian life' (Nee 1958). The essential secondary source for this investigation is the original biography (Taylor & Taylor ([1918]/2005), complemented by Pollock's account ([1962]/1996) of the Yangzhou Riot in 1868-1869. Cited in many of the sources (across all the

abovementioned six categories), the Exchanged Life highlights experiences of despair, desolation, and dark times in Taylor's life. Yet, as these sources note, it was a life-changing experience, which Taylor testified of in his public speaking – a profound experience of 'soul rest' described in this research as mystical transformation *'from holy striving to wholly abiding'* (Lam 2016). By learning to abide in Christ, Taylor's spirituality developed into deepening union and communion with God in the midst of suffering; he thus lived the paradox of divine power in human weakness, and bore choice fruit in adversity (Guinness [1892]/1977; Lyall [1965]/1976; So 2016); etc. Most authors acknowledge the significance of abiding in Christ as one of Taylor's abiding legacies (Broomhall 1931; Bacon 1984; Steer 1995; Chang *et al.* 2005; Anderson 2013), which was embodied in his mission leadership as a calm and contented spirit amid crises, illness, financial constraints, and criticism (Anderson 2013; Doyle 2015b). An important aspect of the Exchanged Life is locating it within the context of a new spiritual climate, partially influenced by the Holiness Movement and Keswick teaching in Britain (Steer 1995; Broomhall 2005b; Austin 2007; Wigram 2007). The new climate had a major impact on the spirituality of the second generation of CIM missionaries, 1875-1888 (Austin 2007), and afforded Taylor a wider Christian audience for his teachings in his second half of life (many are included in Dorsey 2006). Also worth noting is that the Holy Spirit featured prominently in Taylor's writings in the last thirty years of his life, as 'the source of power' in missions (Guinness [1892]/1977; Murray 1902; Bacon 1984; Steer 1995; Kan 2003).

*Fourth, the proposed inside-out approach* (cf. 1.5.2, in Chapter 1) is conducive to integrating perspectives from all the categories reviewed in this chapter, by exploring Taylor's inner life (mystical spirituality) and its impact on his missionary praxis (missionary spirituality). For example, the inside-out approach is necessary to establish the connection between mystical text (*Union and Communion*) and life context (the Exchanged Life), and between the Song of Songs and John 15. This aspect has not received adequate attention in the works reviewed; yet, it is the basis for understanding the developmental stages of Taylor's intimacy with God – from mid-life, 1869, in Zhenjiang; to later years, 1882-1883, when Taylor first expounded the Song of Songs at the CIM conference, in Anqing (Broomhall 2005b).

*Fifth, the marks or characteristics of Taylor and the CIM* have been identified in Houghton's Prologue (1965) as faith, hope and love. While others have been delineated, such as 'the perennial vigour of the CIM/OMF' (Lyall [1965]/1976) and 'the missiological distinctives of the CIM' (Bacon 1984), the three Pauline 'theological virtues' of faith, hope, and love are especially helpful in exploring Taylor's missionary vocation through the lens of Paul's missionary spirituality. Several authors have demonstrated the prominence of Pauline

motifs in Taylor's missionary strategy (Wigram 2007; So 2016); yet, also critiquing the limitations of his ecclesiology (Wigram 2007). A key aspect identified in the historical works are the highs and lows of the CIM's story; notably, the years 1870-1871, and 1874, marked as low ebbs; followed by the 'turn of the tide' in 1875 (Guinness [1892]/1977; Broomhall 2005b). The framing of Taylor's missionary vocation as a mystical path will therefore incorporate these high and low points, as they highlight the paradox of human weakness/divine strength.

*Sixth, the raison d'être for the integration of the mystical and the missional* is founded on descriptions of Taylor as a mystic by several sources: the comparison between the young, 'aimless', 'dreamy', and inexperienced Taylor, who became known over time as 'the Loyola of Protestant Missions' (Martin [1896]/1900) – and developed into 'a master builder' (Broomhall 1929); Taylor's writing on the Song of Songs, as articulated in *Union and Communion*, coupled with his embodiment of divine love in human marriage (Broomhall 1929); an awareness and consciousness of the presence of God (Reilly 1978); mystical fellowship and mystical union with Christ (Pfister 2003); the influences of the Wesleyan and Puritan mystical traditions, and the outworking of Taylor's radical spirituality in confronting Victorian cultural values (Wigram 2007); and an unconventional strategy and spiritual approach that also brought correctives and innovations to 19th century British Protestant missions in China (Pfister 2003). These references certainly acknowledge the mystical dimension of Taylor's spirituality; however, they generally lack depth and definitions on mysticism.

*Seventh, the topic of soul care* has not been identified in the works reviewed; though terms have been employed, such as 'growth of a soul' (Taylor & Taylor [1911]/2005); 'conceived in his soul' (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005; Anderson 2013); 'a window into the soul' of the true Hudson Taylor (Broomhall 2005b), etc. These evoke the need to explore the language of soul in Taylor's life and writings, which this research will undertake. The rationale is that 'soul language' pays attention to 'soul care'; therefore this research will explore lessons that can be learned (or unlearned) from Taylor's spiritual practices; for example, his 'practice of the presence of God' (Broomhall 2005a) and his misconceptions of abiding and striving.

In summation, this study interfaces Taylor's mystical and missionary spirituality, based on the rationale that his leitmotif of union and communion creates a vital dialogue between mysticism and mission. This interface has received little attention in the review of key sources from the late 19th century through to the early 21st century. The aim of the present research is to rectify this situation and bring the richness of Taylor's legacy to the fore.

**Chapter 3**  
**UNION AND COMMUNION AS MYSTICAL TEXT**  
**(The Existential Descriptive Phase)**

**3.1 Introduction**

*Union and Communion* is treated in this research as Taylor's authentic 'expression of soul love', based on his spiritual reading of the Song of Songs and life of intimacy with God. According to Holden, its deep truths were distilled from 'actual experience', and embodied in a 'whole life [that] declared the possibility and blessedness of union with Christ' (The Foreword, in Taylor ([1894]/1931:v-vi)).<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, as founder and director of the China Inland Mission, Taylor 'translated his vision of the Beloved into life-long strenuous service, and ... kept it undimmed through all the years' of his unequalled exemplary life ([1894]/1931:v-vi). Holden therefore considers *Union and Communion* as one of the 'abiding legacies of Mr. Hudson Taylor to the Church' ([1894]/1931:v-vi), a legacy that is firmly embedded in 19th century Protestant missions in China.

Based on the foregoing observations, the golden threads of Taylor's mystical spirituality and missionary spirituality are finely interwoven in this important work of his mature years. A fresh approach, however, is needed to identify its mystical elements, explore the feasibility of Taylor's insights for contemporary spirituality, and assess the viability of his spiritual legacy within the context of 21st century soul discourse. The purpose of this first phase of the hermeneutical process, termed the *existential descriptive phase*, is therefore two-fold: to explore a mystical reading of *Union and Communion*, and to draw corollaries for the cultivation of soul love in contemporary spirituality. A mystical lens will be conducive to exploring the progressive structure of Taylor's commentary,<sup>133</sup> in order to arrive at a succinct exploration of the beloved's transformation as a journey 'from unrest to soul rest'. Section 1 commences with 'the unsatisfied life and its remedy', where the state of 'unrest' is depicted as 'the rule', and satisfaction 'the exception' ([1894]/1931:8-10). The journey culminates in Section VI with 'soul rest', depicting the beloved as 'leaning upon her Beloved', 'satisfied', and 'at rest' ([1894]/1931:73). By remaining largely within the biblical framework of the Song of Songs, the mystical reading will be enriched by key resonances between *Union and Communion* and

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<sup>132</sup> The Foreword by Holden (dated June 1, 1914) in *Union and Communion* ([1894]/1931) alludes to Taylor's text as mystical, while Motyer, in the Foreword (dated October 1962), states that 'Hudson Taylor's view of the Song of Songs, and his book shows us the allegorical method at its very best' ([1894]/1967:vi).

<sup>133</sup> *Union and Communion* is not a formal exegetical commentary *per se*. Taylor's alternative title 'Thoughts on the Song of Solomon' suggests it is a devotional commentary; its profound themes and practical analogies evince the interweaving of his mystical spirituality and missionary application.

the Song of Songs' tradition. These resonances are considered here as 'mystical elements', given their capacity to generate important corollaries for the cultivation of 'soul love' in a contemporary lived spirituality. As a composite, the mystical reading of *Union and Communion* will be encapsulated in a multi-layered transformative paradigm.

The significance of this chapter is its potential to contribute to the 'renaissance' in contemporary Protestant scholarship on the topic of '*union with Christ*'. Several works have admirably researched its biblical roots, recaptured its historical significance in the writings of the Reformers, and advocated for a retrieval of a theology of union with Christ.<sup>134</sup> With reference to Calvin, Billings captures union with Christ as 'theological shorthand for the gospel itself – a key image that pulls together numerous motifs in the biblical witness' (2011:1).<sup>135</sup> It will become evident in this chapter and the next, that Taylor's notion of union is intertwined with the biblical motif of '*abiding in Christ*' (John 15 and the metaphors of the Vine); hence the need to maintain the inextricable connection between *Union and Communion* as mystical text and the *Exchanged Life* as mystical encounter. These intertextual links in Taylor's writing are significant in light of the following assertion: 'After the Gospel of St. John, no other sacred book has enjoyed the predilection of the mystics as the Canticle of Canticles' (Astell & Cavadini 2013:27, citing Parente 1944:149).

### **3.2 Criteria for reading *Union and Communion* as a mystical text**

Since Taylor does not refer explicitly to the term '*mystical*', three criteria are briefly delineated below as foundational to reading *Union and Communion* as a mystical text.

#### *3.2.1 Personal characteristics*

Taylor's mystical affinity with the Song is closely related to his soulful disposition and sensitivity to the presence of God in all aspects of life. He was described in 1872, at a CIM prayer meeting in London, as 'the soul of kindness', one who 'spoke with God face to face, as

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<sup>134</sup> Delineated chronologically, noteworthy sources in Protestant scholarship on the topic of union include: Smedes ([1970]/1983); Tamburello (1994); Billings (2011); Letham (2011); Campbell (2012); Macaskill (2013); Thate, Vanhoozer, Campbell (2014); Peterson (2015); and Wilbourne (2016).

<sup>135</sup> For Tamburello (1994), mystical union or *unio mystica* is a 'particularly fruitful avenue of study' for his research on Calvin and St. Bernard; stating that the 'majority of [Calvin's] references ... contain favorable evaluations of Bernard's theology', and the most frequently quoted works are Bernard's '*Sermons on the Canticles* (1994:2). Rittgers & Evener's chapter on 'The Mystics the Protestants Read' addresses the misconceptions of the 'fundamental contradiction' between mysticism and Protestantism (2019:17-33). Louth notes the influence of the Song on the 17th century English Puritans, and Bernard's writings, which they highly respected (1983:356). Schwanda also discusses Bernard and the Puritan tradition, noting that they share a 'common bond' in their use of the Song of Songs despite biblical and theological differences in their interpretation of union and spiritual marriage (2012:35-74).

a man talks with his friend' (Taylor & Taylor [1911]/2005:222-223). It was from this 'inner circle' of friendship with God', and the 'King's chamber', that his leadership was directed.<sup>136</sup> He also read scripture in a manner that the 'spirit of hope and confidence that breathes through the Word of God possessed him'; thus he was able to write 'as in the presence of his Lord', in a 'deliberate, careful, prayerful manner', inspiring and encouraging others (Baller 1905:3). Baller elaborates that with simplicity, clarity, and 'depth of wisdom', his writing had both a 'power and an art', as follows:

...there was no straining after effect by the use of unusual words, or by the employment of rhetorical arts. It was a simplicity that sprang from the power to think clearly and accurately, and that was informed by knowledge (1905:4-5).<sup>137</sup>

Taylor also had the mental capacity 'to grapple successfully with great problems and to master the finest details'; with the added ability 'to grasp the inwardness of things, [see] their relation to other parts of his work', [and weld] all into one harmonious whole' (1905:1). Therefore, through an integration of lived experiences, a substantial reflection on union with Christ across several decades culminated in his writing on the Song of Songs in later life.<sup>138</sup>

### 3.2.2 *Spiritual reading of Scripture*

Taylor's spiritual reading of the Song is evident in his introductory notes ([1894]/1931:1-8);<sup>139</sup> therefore it is worth noting the resurgence of the spiritual/mystical approach in contemporary methodologies, as per Kourie's observation:

...the importance of a spiritual reading of scripture has now come to the fore. More specifically, reading scripture through a *mystical lens*, as originally seen, inter alia, in the works of Origen, has taken its place, if not centre stage, at least *on* the stage, and no longer in the wings (2011:132).<sup>140</sup>

<sup>136</sup> At the Mildmay conference in 1887, Taylor's references to 'the King's chamber' (Dorsey 2006:255-259) illustrate his affinity with the Song of Songs and his intimacy with God as a mission director.

<sup>137</sup> Baller (1852-1922), the CIM linguist, translated Taylor's *A Retrospect*. In the comments above, he refers specifically to Taylor's correspondence style, as cited in the booklet *The Late J. Hudson Taylor as a Correspondent* (Baller 1905). Regardless, they also apply to Taylor's writing style in *Union and Communion*.

<sup>138</sup> Davis comments that like 'a piece of fruit ... handled, savoured, chewed', the medieval commentators read the Song with attention and enjoyment; 'every word of scripture ... chewed slowly until, like a grain of spice, it yields its full flavour' (2000:238; 2001:74). By way of illustration, John of the Cross' *The Spiritual Canticle*, or 'more correctly 'Songs between the Soul and Her Spouse (*Canciones entre el Alma y el Esposo*), was developed over many years in three versions' (McGinn 2018:110).

<sup>139</sup> By way of clarification, the contents of *Union and Communion* and the original series in *China's Millions* are almost identical, except for the Appendix to the commentary ([1894]/1931:83-84), which includes Taylor's interpretation of (and doctrinal statement on) 'the daughters of Jerusalem'.

<sup>140</sup> Kourie elaborates that in the study of biblical spirituality, the resurgence of the 'spiritual' interpretation of Scripture is evidence of the trend away from the historical-critical method; the latter is 'no longer tenable' in light of changing perspectives in biblical hermeneutics, which 'has witnessed a major heterodox methodological explosion within the last few decades' (2011:132-133).

Origen's (185-254 C.E.) scriptural hermeneutic is foundational, as it 'led the way forward for a mystical interpretation of scripture, and the ascent to the Divine' (Kourie 2009b:238-239).<sup>141</sup> This new exegetical tradition reached a peak in the twelfth century, notably in Bernard of Clairvaux's (1090-1153) tropological interpretation of the Song,<sup>142</sup> which catapulted the biblical Song into 'the most frequently interpreted book of medieval Christianity' (Matter 1990:6).<sup>143</sup>

### 3.2.3 *Mystical union and communion*

In the Western Christian mystical tradition, the topic of mystical union, or *unio mystica*,<sup>144</sup> and spiritual marriage is closely associated with the Song of Songs' tradition, therefore insights from several mystical authors on the Song will inform the present understanding of a mystical lens.<sup>145</sup> The *raison d'être* is that 'the crux of mysticism' is understood as 'communion with God', (or 'with a being conceived as the supreme and ultimate reality'); moreover, '[c]onsciousness of the divine presence can be expressed as either oneness with God, *unio*; or fellowship with God, *communion*' (Kourie 2011:137). Taylor does not use the term '*mystical union*'; nor does he offer definitions of union and communion. Instead, he describes these terms through a variety of biblical analogies, natural metaphors, and practical illustrations. By way

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<sup>141</sup> The Western Christian mystical tradition inherited the use of erotic imagery, union language, and spiritual marriage, etc. from Origen; he was influenced by previous allegorical forerunners such as the Jewish Rabbis who defended the Song of Songs as 'the loveliest, and analogous to the Holy of Holies' (Wakefield 1983:355-357). In Origen's view, the Canticle is titled the Song of Songs 'precisely because it is the most sublime song sung by the soul in her mystical ascent' (Astell & Cavadini 2013:28).

<sup>142</sup> The tropological interpretation emphasises 'the type of spiritually erotic (or perhaps erotically spiritual) love language that is found already in Origen'; it formed an 'important part of both monastic and lay piety of the mystical marriage with Christ' (Matter 1990:15).

<sup>143</sup> Matter outlines how the 'Song of Songs commentary genre' developed and became 'an assumed and important part of medieval poetics' given its 'extraordinarily rich ground for the elaboration of allegory' (1990:10-11). On the resurgence of interest in the Song of Songs, Lam summarises key works and their methodological approaches to the love motif in the Song (2012).

<sup>144</sup> McGinn writes extensively on the topic of mystical union; suffice it to mention the emergence of 'three main models' of Christian understanding of mystical union from its biblical foundations to the end of the 17th century are noted, as follows: first, *unitas spiritus* (union of spirit), based on 1 Cor 6:17; second, Trinitarian; and third, union of indistinction (2020). With respect to the third model and Bernard's notion of union, McGinn clarifies that it is 'primarily an affective, operational union of willing and loving, an *unitas spiritus*, not an ontological union of essence and substance' (1996:63).

<sup>145</sup> Three noteworthy mystical authors on the Song to be cited include Bernard of Clairvaux, whose 'analysis of the modalities and progress of the love affair between God and the soul as seen in the spiritual interpretation of the Song of Songs' is regarded as 'one of the supreme achievements of Christian mysticism' (McGinn 1999:110). Teresa of Avila, 'the first woman to dare to write a commentary on the Song' (McGinn 2016b:23), offers guidance in her *Meditations on the Song of Songs* on the growth toward contemplation in action. On Teresa's 'union through action', Tyler suggests that it is 'a fully embodied state', since she integrates 'bodily affectivity in her spirituality' (2010:142). John of the Cross' *The Spiritual Canticle*, a transposition of the Song of Songs, is considered mystical poetry *par excellence* and among 'some of the finest in the Spanish language'; as a spiritual director with profound psychological insights, John was also 'a practical theologian' *par excellence* (2010:4-8).

of summary, *'union'* is employed several times ([1894]/1931:3, 7, 8, 17, 27, 33, 46, 59, 72), primarily to depict an intimate *'heart-union'* with the Bridegroom in love, fellowship, and service. His emphasis is on *'union with Christ'*<sup>146</sup> (rather than *'union with God'*); it is understood to be the starting point rather than the goal, and can be deepened through grace and experience. The word *'communion'* refers in nuce to personal/intimate fellowship with God, and appears fourteen times across the commentary ([1894]/1931:4-5; 10; 14; 16; 17; 30; 35; 41; 46; 58; 59; 66; 69; 72). Union is presupposed as a constant grace; however, communion can be broken and spoilt, as it is reciprocal and variable. Through repentance and restoration, communion leads gradually to *'uninhibited'*, *'unreserved'*, *'uninterrupted'*, and *'unrestrained'* communion. In the final stage, union and communion are *'manifest'*, where the bride enjoys *'conscious union'* with the bridegroom ([1894]/1931:72).

### 3.3 Connection between soul language and a mystical hermeneutic

For an understanding of *Union and Communion* as an expression of *soul love*, it is helpful to substantiate the use of soul and soul language in relation to a mystical hermeneutic, mystical poetics, and resonances with the Song of Songs' tradition. It will also lay a foundation for the understanding of *soul rest*, *soul work*, and *soul care* in the following chapters, respectively.

#### 3.3.1 *Soul language and mystical poetics*<sup>147</sup>

The language of soul is holistic, not formulaic, since *soul* is not something that we possess. As May succinctly states, *'humans are beings who are souls rather than bodies that have souls'* (1988:64). Traditionally in the Hebrew understanding of *nephesh*, the soul represents *'the whole, living being of an individual person'* (May [1982]/1992:7). It suggests that *'we are both embodied souls and besouled (or ensouled) bodies'* (Hernandez 2008:9). Soul therefore attends to the unity and totality of personhood (or the self);<sup>148</sup> by extension, it encompasses holiness and wholeness, spirituality and sexuality, spirit and flesh, *agape* and *eros*.

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<sup>146</sup> The question of how persons are united with Christ has long been and still is the issue that lies closest to the heart of the Church' (Smedes [1970]/1983:xii). From the Reformed perspective, union *'is the beginning'* and *'a person never loses that important connection of being engrafted into Christ'* (Schwanda 2012:73); however, given the reciprocal nature of communion, a person's enjoyment of God's love may vary; in this regard, *'communion'* may have some resonances with Bernard's *'stronger love-based experiential focus'* (2012:72).

<sup>147</sup> Regarding the *'future of mysticism'*, Hampton asserts that it is *'intertwined with poetics'*, pointing to the similarity between *'aesthetics'* and mysticism in the language of religion and its function in *'communal spiritual discourse'* (2020:19-21).

<sup>148</sup> Hernandez suggests that *soul* and *self* can be viewed synonymously, since from a biblical and theological perspective, *'the reality of the soul represents the "self" as sustained in God'* (2011a:765). The discussion on the history of dualistic interpretations in the Western Christian tradition, particularly the relationship between soul and psyche, flesh and spirit, *agape* and *eros*, sexuality and spirituality, wholeness and holiness, are taken up in

The language of soul is poetic, not dogmatic; thus mystical texts are characterised by poetics.<sup>149</sup> As Burrows explicates, poetics is derived from ‘the Greek verb *poiein*’, which means ‘to make’; and refers ‘not only as a manner of *speaking* and *writing* but as a way of *seeing* and *knowing*’; it also suggests ‘the ideal toward which a poet aspires, the horizon of meaning constructed by a given poem’ (2005b:496). The Song’s poetic vision, according to Davis, recalls the original harmony of creation; restores intimacy between God and humanity; and envisages ‘a total revisioning of human history’ (2001:74).

The language of soul is magnetic, which is one reason that Christian mystics are attracted to biblical poetry. Hampton observes that they ‘found in the poetry of scripture a lyrical and figurative language capable of bringing the believer closer to God’ (2020:19). For example, the mystical yearning in the Song of Songs is detected in the search for “the one my soul loves”; this phrase (repeated four times in Sg 3:1-4) is a ‘repeated echo of the weightiest verse in Torah’ (Deut 6:5) and also a ‘shortened form of “the first and great commandment”’ (Davis 2001:77).

Finally, on the ‘symbolic language of soul’, Tyler describes it as the ‘language of choreography of the transcendent and immanent’; and, in the context of ‘soul-work’ or ‘soul making’, defines the soul as ‘a linguistic signifier that allows us to gaze simultaneously at the physical and spiritual realms’ (2016:181).<sup>150</sup> On 21st century soul-discourse, his five essential components are particularly pertinent for understanding the connection between soul language, mystical poetics, and a mystical hermeneutic, namely: ‘a way of seeing’; ‘the path of unknowing’; ‘ambiguity and paradox’; the ‘symbolic, creative and artistic’; and the ‘relational and libidinal’ (2016:175-181). These components are conducive to identifying resonances between the Song of Songs’ tradition and the mystical elements in Taylor’s text; hence the following discussion which will provide a backdrop to the mystical-transformative paradigm.

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various ways by several works, namely: Didomizio (1983:353-354); Noffke (2005:592-594); Timmerman (2005:575-579); Turner (1995:25-70); Tyler (2010; 2016).

<sup>149</sup> Lam elaborates on the Song as a poetic prism (2012:6-7), which refracts a wide spectrum of perspectives in the Judeo-Christian tradition; to cite a few examples: for Rabbi Akiba, it is the ‘Holy of Holies’ of the scriptures (Davis 2000:240; 2001:65); in Origen’s seven stages of the Christian life, the Song is ‘the crown and climax of the spiritual journey’; and, for Karl Barth, ‘the apogee of Scripture’ (Wakefield 1983a:356); while McGinn considers the Song ‘a Magna Carta, or founding document for both Jewish and Christian mysticism’ (2016b:21).

<sup>150</sup> Tyler suggests that the word ‘soul’ is ‘a call to hold theology and psychology together in their shared pursuit of the divine ... a call to synthesis and creativity’ (2016:181), adding that the ‘delicate web of meaning with which the *logos* of the *psyche* must be spun’ be maintained. The context of his discussion is to ‘enable psychology (and pastoral theology) to reinvest its efforts in a realm of the psyche which is neither based on physical or empirical concerns nor the metaphysics of pure spirit’ (2016:181).

### 3.3.2 *Soul language as 'a way of seeing'*

... the soul-maker helps us attune ourselves to the transcendent by drawing attention to our responses to the immanent. Uniquely, the soul-maker recognizes the person as the locus of intersection of the transcendent and immanent (Tyler 2016:178).

The mystic's capacity to see with an inner eye the hiddenness and inwardness of things draws attention to both the immanent and the transcendent dimensions of life. This inner sight is closely related to ways in which the mystic reads the Bible. McGinn clarifies that the term *mystical* '(Greek: *mystikos*; Latin: *mysticus*)', originally referred to that which is 'hidden' – a term that entered Christianity 'primarily as a way to describe the inner sense of the Bible' (2006:3). For the mystic, this 'in-depth reading delighting in multiple meanings' aims to 'penetrate to the living source of the biblical message, that is, to the Divine Word who speaks in and through human words and texts'; it does not seek 'an academic understanding of the scriptural text', nor 'doctrine and moral obligations' (2006:3). In similar vein, Taylor's biblical expositions were not doctrinaire; his aim was that God's word become 'part and parcel of our spiritual and mental being', not 'matters of mere creed or head-knowledge' (Broomhall 1929:199, 203, 206-207).<sup>151</sup> It is on this basis that he considers the Song of Songs to be of practical use in deepening union and constant abiding in Christ (Taylor [1894]/1931:8). On ways to understand the 'unintelligible' and difficult portions of the Song of Songs, he depends on 'the guidance of the Spirit', or the 'illumination of the Holy Ghost' ([1894]/1931:2-3).<sup>152</sup> This approach is in keeping with the way mystics tend to read scripture, which Kourie asserts, is 'more often ... in an illuminatory sense, namely to explain and confirm the nature of the mystical experience (2009b:239).<sup>153</sup> Taylor's 'experiential' and 'non-critical' approach to the Bible, however, is critiqued by Wigram, as it 'often ignored the historical context or the theological perspective of the writer, preferring to go straight to the points about spiritual life that he wished to make in the light of union with Christ' (2007:190).<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Taylor was 'pre-eminently a man of prayer' with a 'deep uncompromising and unswerving devotion to the Word of God' (Pierson, in Broomhall 1905:65-66). The Bible was foundational to his faith and praxis (Broomhall 1929; Reilly 1978; Pfister 2003; Dorsey 2006; Wigram 2007; Anderson 2013); he believed the Bible to be 'literally true, and to be literally obeyed' (Broomhall 1929:203); his belief in verbal and plenary inspiration was based on 'the very words used and sometimes even on the accident of the word' (Wigram 2007:120-121); moreover, he testified to having tested Scripture '10,000 times over' in experience (Dorsey 2006:158-166).

<sup>152</sup> On the 'superhuman wisdom' required for the interpretation of God's Word, the original publication in *China Millions* (May 1891:55) reads as follows: 'the guidance of the Spirit is promised to all who seek for it: what more can we desire?'

<sup>153</sup> Kourie adds that 'mystics generally show minimal interest, if any, in the historicity of their respective scriptures, or their philological and scientific status' (2009b:239).

<sup>154</sup> Wigram clarifies that Taylor never claimed to be a scholar; he was a 'practitioner of theology' and 'an activist missionary', not a systematic theologian (2007:142).

The mystic's way of seeing is not only based on an in-depth reading of Scripture; it also involves prayer as dialogic and revelatory – a 'receiving and giving' between lover and beloved, and a 'reciprocal relation' between the reader and the text (Waaijman 2002:763-766, 871).<sup>155</sup> With the person as intersecting point, the reading of Scripture 'appeals to' and awakens the person 'in his or her uniqueness' (2002:766). A mystical reading may thus be aptly described as an '*immanent hermeneutic*' (Kourie 2011:141), as the text serves as a 'mediation of meaning which takes place as event in the reader and provides a "door" between different dimensions of consciousness' (2011:141). Such a reading does not reduce the text to 'eisegesis';<sup>156</sup> nor to 'some arbitrary "allegorical" sense', but rather 'an understanding of the scriptures in which we grasp, or rather are grasped by, the mystery of Christ' (Louth 1983:272).

### 3.3.3 *Soul language as a 'path of unknowing'*

... unknowing ... lies at the heart of the soul-project. ... the apophatic unknowing of the soul is simply letting the conscious know its place while the unconscious figurations reassert themselves ... contemporary soul-making will require as much 'unknowing' as it does 'knowing' (Tyler 2016:178).

McGinn highlights two criteria which governed a mystical reading: 'first, the usefulness of the reading for encouraging deeper contact with God; and second, the reading's coherence with the faith of the community' (2006:4). The latter point underscores that 'community' is integral to the term '*communion*', which is both an individual and a corporate invitation (Hernandez 2008:57). Mystical consciousness is developed on the one hand from knowledge of spiritual traditions and shaped by readings coherent with the faith of the community. In this sense, they generally 'appeal to their own particular scripture as canonical', and their experiences do not threaten, but rather 'confirm the authority of the inherited tradition of scriptural hermeneutics' (Kourie 2009b:239). Taylor employs the traditional allegorical method<sup>157</sup> and a Trinitarian emphasis to interpret the 'sacred mysteries of love and grace'; citing 1 Cor 15, the orientation of 'all Scripture' is '[t]hat God may be all in all'; and, since Christ, 'The Incarnate Word', is the 'true key to the written Word', the Holy Spirit's role is to reveal the Bridegroom (Taylor

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<sup>155</sup> Broomhall affirms Taylor's personal approach to reading Scripture; he believed that '[God] always gives us the message for ourselves first ... He does not send us out with sealed despatches'; therefore the 'secret of his fruitfulness' is attributed to the practice of submitting himself first to harmony with God (1929:224).

<sup>156</sup> Kourie clarifies that while a spiritual interpretation 'lends itself to the charge of "eisegesis", respect is given to 'established methods of exegesis, and an ability to "step back" from the text and be alert to its semantic potential, without projecting one's own pre-conceived notions, is important' (2011:136).

<sup>157</sup> On 'Reformation attitudes toward allegory and the Song of Songs', Scheper's article (1974) highlights a diversity of Protestant interpretations. Taylor's allegorical reading is based on the prophetic writings of the OT (Israel's 'Maker was her Husband', and claimed from birth as the bride, Ezek 16); and fulfilled in the NT (John the Baptist refers to Christ as the bridegroom) ([1894]/1931:5-6).

[1894]/1931:1-3). For the most part, Taylor's approach to the 'sacred mysteries' are affirmative and affective; that is, an intimate and loving knowledge of God, as revealed through the written and Incarnate Word, by inspiration and illumination of the Holy Spirit.

On the path of uncertainty and unknowing, Taylor's writings are mostly *cataphatic*;<sup>158</sup> therefore the mystical aspects of negation or apophasis do not strictly apply to his commentary. However, he acknowledges at the outset the importance of *experience* and *grace* in understanding the Song of Songs, as follows: 'It has well been said that this is a song which grace alone can teach, and experience alone can learn' ([1894]/1931:9). This mystical statement is a possible echo of Bernard of Clairvaux's Sermon 1., n. II.<sup>159</sup>

That canticle the anointing of grace alone teaches, and experience only makes the soul to be familiar with it. Those who have had experience of it know it well; let those who have not had that happiness earnestly desire, not to know it, but to experience it (Eales [1895]/1984:xv).

For Bernard, the proponent of 'reading in the book of experience',<sup>160</sup> grace and experience are essential in relating intimately to the Word, Jesus Christ, which he describes in the following lyrical terms: the 'tongue cannot reveal it, it is taught only by grace'; therefore the enjoyment of the Word is at the level of the 'heart, not the ear' ([1895]/1984:525). Taylor's use of the word '*experience*', which occurs in several places ([1894]/1931:26, 28, 29, 45, 52, 58), refers to human experience in general, as well as to affective experiences such as the felt presence of God's nearness; a consciousness of divine power; 'heart-union', 'heart-oneness', 'heart-love', 'heart-rest', etc. The eternal delights of the Song might therefore be experienced as a present reality, bringing 'true blessing and satisfaction, in stark contrast to the 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity' of Ecclesiastes ([1894]/1931:4-7). His existential emphasis in the Song is lived

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<sup>158</sup> Louth's chapter on 'Apophatic and Cataphatic Theology' provides a succinct elucidation of 'the use of negation (*apophasis*) and affirmation (*kataphasis*) in our ways of talking about God' (2012:137-146). The mysteriousness of the divine leads to 'the negating of any affirmations about God, thereby bearing testimony to the inadequacy of any human conception of God' (2012:137). Elsewhere he refers to John of the Cross' writings on the dark night, which demonstrates the stripping of the intellect of images and concepts in the soul's preparation for union (Louth [1981]/2007:179).

<sup>159</sup> Credit is given to McGinn for informing me of this echo of Bernard's reference, in response to my paper on James Hudson Taylor and the Song of Songs, at the SSCS/SPIRASA meeting in May 2015, Johannesburg. Little evidence is available to determine the extent to which Taylor read Bernard and other Christian mystics, apart from his copy of Brother Lawrence's *Practice of the Presence of God* (cf. 2.3.4).

<sup>160</sup> McGinn refers to Bernard in several works, suffice it to highlight three examples. First, the phrase '*liber experientiae*', which Bernard coined, refers to 'the personal witness of the God-seeker' (2018:104). Second, in a reading of the Song of Songs, he 'insisted that his readers should use [it] to guide their own experience and analyze their experience as a key to grasping the inner depth of the Song's spiritual meaning' (1999:100). Third, reading 'in the book of experience' does not mean giving up reading the Bible; rather, 'both the biblical inner message and [one's] own interior experience' are needed 'to advance on the road to contemplation and union' (2012a:32).

reality, manifested by inner harmony and outward generativity, as follows: ‘Peace, perfect peace; rest, constant rest; answers to all our prayers; victory over all our foes; pure, holy living; ever-increasing fruitfulness’ ([1894]/1931:8). In contrast, negative experiences refer to broken communion with Christ, which is a ‘common experience’; while ‘inexperience’ along the journey and the ‘painful experience’ of relapsing are also recognised as integral to the transformative process ([1894]/1931:52). Learning through grace and experience therefore infers levels of unknowing that are beyond human conception and control,<sup>161</sup> especially since the sacred mysteries of the Song are experienced through the paradoxical elements of presence and absence, light and darkness, delight and desolation, etc., as the paradigm will demonstrate.

### 3.3.4 *Soul language as ‘ambiguity and paradox’*

... ambiguity ... is the soul’s true home ... the demands of the soul require an openness to the ambiguity that lies at the heart of the human personality. The paradox of the Trinitarian vision thus reflects the paradox that lies at the heart of human personhood (Tyler 2016:178-179).

Corresponding to the path of unknowing, mystical texts are imbued with ambiguity and paradox; in particular, themes of *divine darkness* and *the dark night* (Louth [1981]/2007:176-185),<sup>162</sup> which are associated with ‘negative theology’ (McGinn 2012a:33).<sup>163</sup> For example, the negation in John of the Cross’ poem *The Dark Night*, characterized by ‘(poverty, purity, nakedness, void, death, and so on) is in reality theological communion’; here ‘[t]he emptying of self is transformed into the fullness of God’ (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:355). This paradoxical ‘symbol of night’,<sup>164</sup> according to Matthew (1995:51-55), is not equated with negativity and gloom; rather, it ‘comes upon us and is mystery, beauty, terror and new birth’ –

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<sup>161</sup> Louth asserts that ‘the affirmation of the divine has always been hedged about by a sense of the mysteriousness of the divine, leading to the negating of any affirmations about God, thereby bearing testimony to the inadequacy of any human conception of God’ (2012).

<sup>162</sup> Briefly stated, Divine Darkness in the Patristic tradition is ‘a symbol of the radical distance between the created soul and the Uncreated God’ (Louth [1981]/2007:179); while the Dark Night in John of the Cross focuses more on the disclosure of sinfulness and the purifying of love in preparation for union ([1981]/2007:180-181). For the Fathers it is ‘a *purified* love that enters into the Divine Darkness, whereas for John it is ‘in the Dark Night that the soul experiences *purifying* love’ ([1981]/2007:181). The difference in perspectives is partially attributed to John being more ‘introspective’ and ‘experiential’ than the ‘objective, theoretical character of Patristic theology’ ([1981]/2007:181).

<sup>163</sup> McGinn elucidates three forms of negation, all involving paradoxes that are an integral part of the mystical tradition, namely: ‘we know God best by unknowing; we find God by relinquishing him; God is present even when he abandons us’ (2012:33-34).

<sup>164</sup> John’s symbol of night is paradoxical, as it also symbolises death/resurrection, as Matthew elaborates: the symbol is ‘able to carry humanity’s pain’ and ‘hold even such a sense of alienation from God that the inner self feels dismantled’; yet it also ‘announces that as the place of resurrection’ and assures us of a ‘God who heals in darkness’ (1995:55-56).

the place for encounter, of unifying the lover and the beloved – and a transforming journey of union (1995:51-55). Soul language is thus imbued with ambiguity and paradox given the nature of the *mysterium tremendum* (cf. 5.2.8 of this research) and the supernatural ways of God:

divine contemplation has the property of being secret and above one's natural capacity, not merely because it is supernatural but also because it is the way that guides the soul to the perfections of union with God toward which one must advance humanly by not knowing and divinely by ignorance, since these perfections are not humanly knowable (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:438).<sup>165</sup>

In mystical consciousness, the salient paradox of God's presence and absence is also noteworthy, where 'God is sometimes most present to the mystic by his absence and most absent by his presence'; thus, mystics often write of the 'dark night of spirit' as a time or a season when 'God has seemingly abandoned the lover, an immense longing that nothing can satisfy, and a brutal hell that is somehow heaven' (Egan 2010:xx). Intrinsic to the two 'dark nights' in the Song is the paradox of the divine presence and absence, which is also integral to the stages of deepening of union and communion. Taylor's use of terminology in this regard needs clarification, as he uses several terms in a generic way to describe the human experience of God's absence. On the two stages of 'broken communion', the beloved is described in the first night as 'desolate and in the dark' ([1894]/1931:35); and, in the second, she is on a 'more painful' search, 'wandering in the dark', 'wounded, dishonoured ... and almost in despair' ([1894]/1931:52-53). The current paradigm therefore distinguishes these negative experiences as '*desolation*' (the first night), and '*darkness*' (the second night); where desolation is caused by self-will and self-interest; and darkness, by spiritual pride and spiritual sloth ([1894]/1931:47-53). Succinctly stated, the experience of God's absence in Taylor's understanding is caused by sin, self-centeredness, and self-interest.

To a certain extent, Taylor's terminology finds resonance with Ignatius' use of '*desolation*', which may be briefly described as 'a movement towards earthly things and a tendency towards loss of faith, hope and love'; while '*consolation*' is 'a desire for heavenly things, prompter service of God,' and an intensifying of 'faith, hope and love' (Egan 1983:94-95).<sup>166</sup> Taylor's emphasis on sin as the cause differs with John of the Cross on the role of sin

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<sup>165</sup> The 'divine things and perfections are not known as they are in themselves while they are being sought and acquired, but when they are already found and acquired' (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:438).

<sup>166</sup> Following Egan (1983:94-95), the movements of desolation and consolation are not equated simply with transitory emotional states or mood fluctuations; they describe a specific orientation toward God or away from God; hence the sense of God's absence or nearness. Specific 'dangers' are also worth noting: 'of consolation, vanity and pride; of desolation, discouragement' (1983:94-95). In the Ignatian tradition, the rules for the 'discernment of spirits disclose the sources of these movements and help a person to find God's will' (1983:94).

in the dark night. For John, it ‘is not that sin causes the Dark Night, but rather that the Dark Night discloses the soul’s sinfulness’ (Louth [1981]/2007:180). His experiential approach points out the soul’s ‘weakness and imperfection’, and the ‘contrary qualities’ such as the soul’s ‘blackness’, ‘darkness’ and ‘ugliness’ (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:416-417). Therefore, the purification or purging in the dark night is intensely painful, afflictive, and tormenting<sup>167</sup> because the divine light is ‘very bright and pure, and the soul in which it shines is dark and impure’ (1991:402-403). The purification also occurs on several levels (outside the scope of Taylor’s commentary): ‘it purges not only the intellect of its light and the will of its affections but also the memory of its discursive knowledge’ (1991:410). This ‘night of *faith*’ (Louth [1981]/2007:179) therefore frees the person for ever increasing levels of transparency in order to relate to God in ‘naked faith’ or ‘pure faith’, without attachment to imaginative constructions or theological fixations.

### 3.3.5 *Soul language as ‘symbolic, creative and artistic’*

... the symbolic and mythic becomes the special locus for this ambiguous sense of self to find expression. ... The symbolic sources of the soul thus lie very close to the sources of creative and artistic endeavor and thus the pursuit of the soul will often manifest itself through these means (Tyler 2016:179).

The Song of Songs is biblical poetry par excellence, opening a window to transcendence and immanence, hence the value of a mystical hermeneutic. As Kourie notes, since poetry ‘open[s] doors and windows to a hidden dimension’, the *semantic potential* of the text allows for the possibility of multiple readings to come to the fore (2011:148). Rather than be defined by the limitations of literalism, determination, and rationalism, ‘polysemous readings of scripture’ have several advantages: first, the recognition of the symbolic, transformative and mystical aspects of scripture means that the emphasis on the inner world is no longer neglected; second, the ‘*synchronic*’ aspect of the text allows ‘the myths of the Bible’ to represent ‘a living dialectic of our inner history’;<sup>168</sup> and, third, it effects ‘mystical illumination’ for the author and readers (2011:140, 148).

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<sup>167</sup> With reference to John of the Cross’ poem *The Dark Night* (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:351-457), the suffering is immense in the dark night of contemplation, because ‘the brighter and purer the supernatural, divine light is, the darker it is for the soul; and the less bright it is, the less dark it is to the soul’ (1991:410).

<sup>168</sup> The Song’s poetic vision addresses the mythic symbols of Genesis and envisages a reversal of ‘the primordial exile from Eden’ and a ‘return ... to the Garden of God; therefore, ‘multiple meanings’ are needed since ‘healing must occur at multiple levels’, namely: between woman and man; the natural beauty of the world; and for humans to live more fully in the presence of God (Davis 2000:232).

The use of ‘symbolic, creative, and artistic’ approaches also optimises the Song’s lyrical poetry, which is embedded with a symphony of mystique and evokes a divine-human love song par excellence. As Bernard seems to suggest, its music is heard by an inner ear that is attuned to intimacy: ‘it is not a melody that resounds abroad but the very music of the heart ... only the singer hears it and the one to whom he sings – the lover and the beloved’ (Walsh [1971]/1976:6-7). In this sense, the Song’s lyricism transcends the limits of language and discursive thought; it draws on the ‘apophatic dimension of language’, and ‘guides us toward the heights and depths of human experience by the melody of desire’ (Burrows 2005b:497). It follows that in the composition of music and hymns for worship, poetics plays a significant role in shaping communal faith that finds expression ‘not only in argument but also in song’ (2005b:497).

Taylor’s commentary also resounds with the music of the heart and the mystique of the divine-human song, which surpasses ‘the joy of earthly things’ ([1894]/1931:7). In his introductory notes, he lauds ‘*the Song of Songs!* There is no song like it. Read aright, it brings a gladness to the heart’ ([1894]/1931:4). Taylor personally delighted in hymns, and often led the singing and played the harmonium at CIM meetings (Taylor & Taylor [1911]/2005:222). Thus, in sync with his spirituality, he includes extracts from hymns and poetry in his commentary that also reflect the communal expressions of 19th century evangelical spirituality. Space does not allow for an elaboration at this point, suffice it to mention their titles: ‘*In the secret of His presence*’<sup>169</sup> (Taylor [1894]/1931:6); ‘*O for a closer walk with God*’<sup>170</sup> ([1894]/1931:10); ‘*O Jesu, King most wonderful*’<sup>171</sup> ([1894]/1931:37); ‘*Jesus, Thy life is mine*’<sup>172</sup> ([1894]/1931:46); and ‘*Jesus, I am never weary*’<sup>173</sup> ([1894]/1931:69).

### 3.3.6 *Soul language as ‘relational and libidinal’*

Soul-making is at heart a relational process. ... an embodied Christian view of self that maintains the transcendent through relationship with the bodily and libidinal. The soul is found not in flight from the body but in the very embrace of its ambiguity and libido. ... The future of the soul lies in the libidinal and relational (Tyler 2016:178-179).

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<sup>169</sup> The hymn by Ellen Lakshmi Goreh (1883), a CIM favourite, is cited twice: first, to express the presence of Jesus as the soul’s delight; and the solitary place of prayer to withstand earthly trials and temptations (Taylor [1894]/1931:6); and second, to emphasise restful abiding in Christ, moment by moment ([1894]/1931:27).

<sup>170</sup> Two lines from the hymn by William Cowper (1772) are cited in Section I, which laments the loss of one’s first love and reflects on the blessedness when ‘first I saw the Lord’ ([1894]/1931:10).

<sup>171</sup> Introducing Section III, the hymn by Bernard of Clairvaux (1153), translated into English by Edward Caswall (1848), expresses the ineffable sweetness and joy of Jesus, and the due response of loving him alone and reflecting his image in life ([1894]/1931:37).

<sup>172</sup> Concluding Section III, the hymn by Francis Ridley Havergal (1876), captures the inseparable union and intertwining of Jesus’ life and ours ([1894]/1931:46).

<sup>173</sup> Section V concludes with the hymn by Boethia Thompson (1865), which sings of the blessed rest that the weary soul finds in the arms and at the breast of Jesus ([1894]/1931:69).

Regarding human embodiment in the Song, the ‘relational and libidinal’ aspects of soul love are erotic and evocative. In the mystical (monastic) tradition, the Song’s ‘exuberant celebration of *eros*’ served as a ‘reflectively apt human model for divine love ... in its erotic expression’ (Turner 1995:41). Though Taylor makes several references to ‘Bridegroom of the Soul’ ([1894]/1931:4, 70; Dorsey 2006:166-179), or ‘the Bridegroom of the Song of Songs’,<sup>174</sup> (Dorsey 2006:237-239), unlike the classic mystics,<sup>175</sup> he does not focus on ‘spiritual marriage’ *per se*.<sup>176</sup> However, his view of ‘conscious union’ with the Bridegroom, encapsulated as ‘in all things she is one with Him’ (Taylor [1894]/1931:59), suggests a resonance with Bernard’s view of marriage between the soul and the Word (Christ): ‘a spiritual and sacred bond’, ‘a communion’; ‘an identification with the Beloved’; and, ‘the perfect correspondence of will [that] makes of two, one spirit’ (Eales [1895]/1984:508-509).

An integrative approach to the Song is therefore more conducive to Taylor, where religious and sexual images are ‘mutually informative’, and where ‘each is incomplete without the other’ (Davis 2000:233).<sup>177</sup> As a married man, Taylor ‘was no ascetic, devoid of natural affection; indeed, nature as well as grace had richly endowed him in this respect’; in fact, as Broomhall elaborates, the ‘joy and satisfaction’ that he found in his ‘wedded love’ provided the human relational context for his writing on the Song (1929:138). Taylor pays little attention to human marriage in his commentary, however, except for one reference to Paul’s teaching on union between Christ and the church as ‘the pattern for every godly union’ ([1894]/1931:3). Several general illustrations of human love and familial relationships are employed though to elicit responses of unreserved giving, reciprocal intimacy, and loving obedience to God ([1894]/1931:11-14). Elsewhere, Taylor’s writing, especially his personal correspondence, is imbued with authentic expressions of human passion, which undoubtedly served as a springboard for eternal realities. For example, he refers to ‘the kiss’ of the Song of Songs on two occasions: first, after Maria’s death in 1870, amidst mixed emotions, he expresses the

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<sup>174</sup> In later years, Taylor’s preaching on the Song of Songs gained popularity. For example, in the summer of 1888, his bible readings on the Song of Songs at Moody’s conference, at Northfield, Massachusetts, ‘were thrilling and transforming’ (Broomhall 2005b:511). His expositions on love for Jesus, as typified in the Song of Songs, ‘quickened the spirit of the audience’ (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:427-429).

<sup>175</sup> On ‘spiritual marriage’, McGinn comments that for the classic mystics, ‘marital love is the highest form, the love that best expresses union’ (1996:63); notably, Bernard’s Sermon 23 on the Song; Teresa of Avila’s *Interior Castle* 7.1-2; and John of the Cross’ *The Spiritual Canticle* (2006:429, 451-459; 460-464 respectively). McGinn elaborates that in the commentary on John’s *Canticle* (Stanzas 20-35), the Song is cited around 40 times to describe mystical marriage (2018:115).

<sup>176</sup> A brief reference to spiritual ‘marriage’ to ‘Christ the Bridegroom’ is cited in Taylor’s letter to a Swiss colleague, from Lausanne, September 1878, which emphasises the assurance of Christ’s ever loving presence (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:311-312).

<sup>177</sup> Within the horizon of God’s love, Davis discusses the possibility that ‘sexual love’ may be recognized ‘as an arena for the formation of the soul’ (2000:233).

nearness and intimacy of God’s presence, as follows: ‘He kisses me with the kisses of His love, which are better than wine’ (Broomhall 1929:161). Second, in his exposition of John 15 at the Keswick Convention in 1896, he reveals that he had received ‘God’s kiss every morning for the past ten years’ after God spoke to him through the affection of his little daughter (Dorsey 2006:284). Third, on the rest of God, or being ‘silent’ in His love (Zeph. 3:17), he cites his experience in Paris to illustrate the meaning. Reunited with his wife Jennie after a long ministry trip, they were seated in a cab, enthralled by silence and presence: ‘we could not speak, we could only sit in silence side by side – the joy was too great for expression’ (Beauchamp 1890:99).<sup>178</sup> It is evident from these few examples that Taylor’s writing and spirituality are not based on a repression or denial of his ‘embodied/libidinal self’ (Tyler 2016:181).<sup>179</sup>

### 3.4 A mystical-transformative paradigm: ‘from unrest to soul rest’

Having laid the foundation for a mystical reading of *Union and Communion* and clarified the use of soul language in the context of the Song of Songs, the purpose of this section is to explore the beloved’s transformative journey ‘*from unrest to soul rest*’ through a mystical-transformative paradigm. The exploration pivots on an important observation at the outset of the commentary, that the ‘habitual experience’ of unrest and dissatisfaction in the spiritual life is common to many people; however, ‘[t]hey know not the rest, the joy of abiding in CHRIST [sic];<sup>180</sup> and they know not how to attain to it, nor why it is not theirs’ (Taylor [1894]/1931:10). Writing expressly for the purpose of deepening union with and constant abiding in Christ, Taylor delineates six progressive stages, namely: Section I: ‘The Unsatisfied Life and Its Remedy’;<sup>181</sup> Section II: ‘Communion Broken – Restoration’;<sup>182</sup> Section III: ‘The Joy of

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<sup>178</sup> While on ministry trips in China, Taylor urged both Maria and Jennie to keep in mind that Jesus was their Spouse, the object of their devotion. As per Maria’s correspondence, God was not only ‘our tender Father’ who teaches and disciplines, but also ‘our heavenly Husband’ who is ‘fully competent’ to undertake in every circumstance (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:144); and, of Jennie, Taylor wrote how grateful he was for ‘such a wife as alone could satisfy my heart – one to whom the Lord Jesus is more than husband’ ([1918]/2005:308).

<sup>179</sup> A striking feature of Taylor’s correspondence is the deep affection that he expresses to his parents and his sisters, where kisses were creatively inked into his letters from Shanghai during his early days in China. Several more revealing expressions of marital intimacy in Taylor’s original letters, however, have been carefully covered; presumably censored by Geraldine Taylor, as they ‘sometimes overstepped the Victorian propriety’ (Austin 2019:124-125).

<sup>180</sup> Taylor capitalises many references to God, Christ, and the Spirit; moreover, the gendered ‘HE’ for the divine proliferates throughout his text. These are retained, however, as it would be cumbersome and difficult to amend. However, his use of the archaic English terms ‘thine’ and ‘thee’ are replaced here by ‘ours’, ‘your’, etc.

<sup>181</sup> Section I, Sg 1:2-2:7 ([1894]/1931:8-27); *China’s Millions* (Jun 1891:69-71; Aug-Sep 1891:97-100).

<sup>182</sup> Section II, Sg 2:8-3:5 ([1894]/1931:27-37); *China’s Millions* (Oct 1891:125-126; Nov 1891:139-141).

Unbroken Communion’;<sup>183</sup> Section IV: ‘Communion Again Broken – Restoration’;<sup>184</sup> Section V: ‘Fruits of Recognized Union’;<sup>185</sup> and Section VI: ‘Unrestrained Communion’.<sup>186</sup>

The multi-layered transformative paradigm in this chapter will not adhere strictly to Taylor’s six-stage structure;<sup>187</sup> however, the salient points will be extrapolated and the nuances retained to address the following experiential question: *‘What are the key elements and transformative motifs in deepening union and communion with the Triune God, and which particular forms of spiritual cultivation would be apt to facilitate the joy and rest of abiding in Christ?’* In order to maintain a mystical focus, the paradigm will comprise eight mystical elements, including a corresponding corollary and practical implications for the cultivation of soul love, as follows: *disposition* for encounter (be still); *desire* for presence (be alone with God); *discernment* of neglect (be watchful over your own soul); *desolation* through worldliness (be careful of little seductions); *delight* of intimacy (be holy/wholly for the Beloved); *darkness* through complacency (be humbled by mystery); *dignity* of creation (be nurtured by beauty); and *detachment* in fruitfulness (be a loving sacrament).

#### 3.4.1 *Disposition for encounter ([1894]/1931:8-12): Be still*

The human beloved is introduced in the opening section as having reached a certain level of spiritual maturity and holiness – not ‘dead in trespasses and sins, to whom the Lord is as a root out of a dry ground’; on the contrary, ‘her eyes [have been] opened to behold His beauty’ and now she longs for ‘a fuller enjoyment of His love’ ([1894]/1931:8). Taylor interprets Sg 1:2 (‘Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth’), as representing a deeper spiritual longing, which ‘marks a distinct stage in the development of the life of grace in the soul’ ([1894]/1931:8).<sup>188</sup> Previously, the beloved was content with her Lord’s absence, finding satisfaction in self-occupation and other interests; however, they no longer suffice. Though she experiences occasional visitations from the Beloved, which are ‘precious times of enjoyment’, her longing is not satiated, and her joy is intermittent ([1894]/1931:9). It is evident thus far that grace and experience have prepared the beloved for a deeper journey of sacred intimacy; hence the use of the term ‘*disposition*’ as the first mystical element in the paradigm. The inference is

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<sup>183</sup> Section III, Sg 3:6-5:1 ([1894]/1931:37-46); *China’s Millions* (Dec 1891:153-154).

<sup>184</sup> Section IV, Sg 5:2-6:10 ([1894]/1931:47-58); *China’s Millions* (Feb 1892:15-16; Mar 1892:29-30).

<sup>185</sup> Section V, Sg 6:11-8:4 ([1894]/1931:58-69); *China’s Millions* (May 1892:57-58).

<sup>186</sup> Section VI, Sg 8:5-14 ([1894]/1931:70-82); *China’s Millions* (May 1892:58-59; Jun 1892:71-73).

<sup>187</sup> Notably Section 1, a dense almost 20-page section, is spread across the first three mystical elements.

<sup>188</sup> Bernard describes stages of the spiritual life corresponding to ‘the kiss’, as follows: first, at conversion, the soul kisses the *feet* of the Lord; second, as the soul arises, it kisses the *hand*, which signifies ‘friendship, familiarity and intimacy with the Lord’; and third, the kiss of the *mouth* is a sign of union with the Bridegroom, to be given at the end of the ascent, and fully attained only in the Kingdom (Arminjon 1983:56-58).

drawn from the words *'Let him'* (Sg 1:2), which indicates a state of readiness and receptivity to love ('the kisses of his mouth'). Following Burke, *disposition* refers to '[a] quality or condition of a person necessary for the performance of some action or of preparation for an encounter with the mysteries of God' (2012:125).<sup>189</sup>

The state of the beloved's soul at this initial stage, however, is that of unrest, even 'habitual unrest'. This applies on the one hand to people who might have lost their first love, compared to when they first met the Lord; hence their sense of dissatisfaction. For others, as the longing for Christ increases and worldly interests diminish, the Beloved's absence becomes 'an ever-increasing distress' through 'interruptions to communion' ([1894]/1931:10). The beloved therefore cries out: 'Oh that I knew where I might find Him!' 'Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth' ([1894]/1931:10). This cry suggests that a mystical encounter of being fully seen, personally kissed, and unconditionally loved by God is a profound possibility. However, sinfulness, the effects of 'the Fall', and the human condition mitigate against the sacred intimacy depicted in the Song of Songs.

On more specific causes of unrest, Taylor makes two important assertions: first, though the Beloved is present and waiting for our response, 'the conditions that debar His approach are all of [our] own making';<sup>190</sup> and, second, '[t]he real secret of an unsatisfied life lies too often in an unsundered will' ([1894]/1931:11-12). The consequence is that the beloved will remain 'an unsatisfied lover' and will not find rest of soul 'till her love reaches that point of surrender' ([1894]/1931:11-12). Surrender implies giving oneself up fully in order to trust and claim him fully, which engenders wholehearted responses of 'love', 'honour' and 'obedience' ([1894]/1931:11). However, one of the key obstacles is a 'deep-seated distrust of our loving Lord and MASTER', which is manifested as being content to live on one's own resources; wanting to remain in control; and fearing that the Lord might require something beyond our powers or willingness to give ([1894]/1931:12).

In light of the foregoing condition of unrest, the first corollary evoked is *'be still'*, which refers to a spiritual practice of disposing oneself to the reverence and presence of God. This is poetically expressed in the first hymn cited by Taylor, 'In the secret of His presence [h]ow my soul delights to hide!' ([1894]/1931:6). Within the secret space of prayer, *being still* implies *being here*. Through focused attention to the rhythm of one's breathing, gratitude for the present moment engenders a kind of surrender that vacates the space for God. The purpose is

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<sup>189</sup> This definition is commonly applied in the Roman Catholic tradition to the conditions required for the reception of the sacraments (Burke 2012:125).

<sup>190</sup> Taylor's use of archaic terms such as 'thine' and 'thee' are replaced in this chapter with 'yours' and 'you'.

not a vain exercise or a vacuous escape, but rather a consent to *'let God'* be God to me and in me. As John of the Cross suggests, it is an emptying of those affections which are entangled and disordered, which are not of God, as 'God does not fit in an occupied heart' (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:692-693). Through the practice of a simple loving attention,<sup>191</sup> negativity arises from the shadows to bring to light the sins which prevent 'the consummation of [our] joy', namely: conceit, self-will, egoistic control, lack of trust, lack of surrender, pride, and foolishness (Taylor [1894]/1931:9-12). By letting go of the tensions, a space is opened to plumb our depths; and, by grace, the void is filled by ultimate satisfaction in Christ. Soul love therefore calls forth stillness and surrender, especially in the seemingly negative condition of unrest. Through the momentous in-breaking of God, it might well serve as an awakening to and a transformation in love;<sup>192</sup> for as Taylor assures, '[d]espite all the unworthy fears of our poor hearts, [d]ivine love is destined to conquer' ([1894]/1931:12-13).

### 3.4.2 *Desire for presence ([1894]/1931:8-16): Be alone with God*

The second mystical element of *desire* is evoked by 'Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth';<sup>193</sup> a 'recorded experience' which Taylor interprets as 'a Divine warrant for the desire for sensible manifestations of His presence – sensible communications of His love' ([1894]/1931:9). The desire for 'the kiss' represents an intense longing for the felt presence of God, and a more consistent sense of the divine presence; not a coming and going of divine visitations, like the ebb and flow of 'the changing tide' ([1894]/1931:9). These unquenchable human longings are not created 'to tantalize' the soul; in fact, they originate in the divine initiative, as captured in the following mystical insights: 'There is 'a love far stronger than [ours] waiting, longing for satisfaction. The Bridegroom is waiting for [us] all the time ...'

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<sup>191</sup> In *The Living Flame of Love*, John of the Cross describes contemplation as 'a loving attention to God' and a 'simple, loving awareness'; since God communes with people through this 'simple, loving knowledge'; and as the person communes with God in this loving and attentive way, the inflow comes from God 'who secretly and quietly inserts in the soul loving wisdom and knowledge' (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:686). He also observes that the reliance on the intellect (or busying oneself with particular knowledge) can hinder one's progress, which calls for surrender: 'Since the intellect cannot understand the nature of God, it must journey in surrender to him rather than by understanding, and thus it advances not by understanding' (1991:692-693).

<sup>192</sup> In John's mystical teaching on intimacy with God, the soul yearns for a 'touch of divinity more than all God's other favors'; and this communication 'God gives to the soul by himself alone, outside and exclusive of all creatures' (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:454). He adds that '[i]n one of these touches, since this is the highest degree of prayer, the soul receives greater good than in all else' (1991:453).

<sup>193</sup> In the Jewish tradition, 'the kiss' of Sg 1:2 was interpreted with reference to Num. 12:8 (when God spoke with Moses "mouth to mouth"); thus, in the messianic age, God would speak even more intimately than before (Davis 2000:242). The kiss was Bernard's 'favourite image for union', devoting eight sermons to Sg 1:1; here the Word is 'a kiss', 'an unreserved infusion of joys, a revealing of mysteries', etc. (McGinn 2020:7). For Teresa of Avila, it is a 'sign of great peace and friendship'; interestingly, she makes a bold statement that divine friendship with the human race was effected by the bride's longing and asking for 'that union so great that God became man' (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1980:221).

([1894]/1931:9-11). Human desire for God is thus propelled by the divine longing for union and communion with humanity, as follows: ‘The Bridegroom of His Church longs for communion with His people more than they long for fellowship with Him’ ([1894]/1931:14).

For Taylor, the fulfilment of desire, through a taste and enjoyment of ‘the sacred intimacies of His wondrous love’, brings a fuller recognition of who Jesus is (not only as Bridegroom, but also as ‘Priest and King’). This is evident in the beloved’s ardent and swift response to the divine desire, and her ‘glad discovery’ of her beloved as ‘a King – her King’. Thus she pours out her heart aspiration (Sg 1:4a): ‘Draw me: we will run after Thee!’ ([1894]/1931:14-15). The sense of absence has a ‘trembling’ effect on the bride, resulting in a determination ‘to surrender all’; ‘come what may to follow fully’; and ‘yield her very self to Him’, ‘heart and hand, influence and possessions’. The joyous outcome of relinquishment is rest, and to the extent that she surrenders, her soul is satiated: ‘When the heart submits, then Jesus reigns. And when Jesus reigns, there *is* rest’ ([1894]/1931:13-14).

On the importance of human longing in spiritual experience, Bernard<sup>194</sup> views desire for God as ‘first and foremost, an ontological reality’;<sup>195</sup> a ‘movement of being which carries the person toward God’; and, when accepted, ‘the mysterious force ... communicates an inner integrity to a person’s life’ (Casey 1988:186-187). In this context, seeking God is ‘simply an assent to the full implications of human being’ (1988:186). As ‘an element of the inner life of every human being’, desire is also conflicted by ‘primal sinfulness’ and ‘negative elements in spiritual growth’; therefore ‘both cognitive and affective faculties’ require ‘progressive purification’ in the process of restoration (1988:129, 101). In the Song particularly, the theme of search for the Beloved and desire for God are closely related. Bernard views ‘the fact of his absence’ as necessitating the search; therefore, ‘[t]o seek God in an active and personal sense is already the effect and sign of the inner presence of God’ (1988:85). In other words, the felt ‘absence’ of God subjectively increases and intensifies desire for God.

In terms of the cultivation of soul love, the second corollary drawn is ‘*be alone with God*’. Several of Taylor’s illustrations in this section allude to this practice, namely: to meet in private and ‘to have him all to ourselves’; the ‘King [has] brought me into His chambers’; ‘to be alone with Himself’; the ‘morning watch’ or ‘the early hour’ as time ‘profitably spent’ and reserved to be with Jesus; ‘taking time to be holy’ and ‘quiet waiting before God’

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<sup>194</sup> Casey’s chapter (1988:63-129) discusses Bernard’s repertoire of vocabulary for desire, used in his *Sermons on the Song of Songs*.

<sup>195</sup> Desire for Bernard is not only ontological and anthropological, but also eschatological; hence, ‘all spiritual experience in this present life is a foretaste of the final, definitive spiritual union which is realised in glory’, when the soul will ‘enter into a state of complete spiritual unity with the Word’ (Casey 1988:206).

([1894]/1931:13-15). As Hernandez explicates, with reference to Nouwen's writings, 'the measure of [our] solitude is the measure of [our] capacity for communion' (2008:58). Devotional practices and religious disciplines are intended for communion, to be touched by the dynamics of divine *eros* itself.

By being alone with God, soul love has several reciprocal effects on the divine Beloved, as delineated from the perspective of a parental heart and missionary experience. First, we give God pleasure by being with God, not merely seeking God to meet our needs (like selfish children); second, taking time to be holy includes listening patiently for God's reply, instead of merely bringing questions and petitions, then hastening off without expecting a response (Taylor [1894]/1931:15); third, 'quiet waiting' in God's presence is a prayerful way of preventing unnecessary mistakes and sorrows; and finally, acts of adoration maintain the strength and quality of Otherness, as captured in the Sg 1:4b: 'We will be glad and rejoice in Thee ... your love is more than wine; rightly do they love and adore Thee' ([1894]/1931:15).

### 3.4.3 *Discernment of neglect ([1894]/1931:16-27): Be watchful over your own soul*

While the aforementioned 'glad discovery' of the King is a sweet realisation to the beloved, another 'discovery not less important' is the tender exposure of her 'blackness', and an awakening by the divine light to that which is hidden in the darkness ([1894]/1931:15-16). Speaking with 'inimitable grace and tenderness', the Bridegroom assures her that she is 'comely' – a poignant dialogue which demonstrates that intimate encounter between lover and beloved holds the paradoxes of a genuine and robust spirituality. As Taylor states: 'Nothing humbles the soul like sacred and intimate communion with the Lord; yet there is a sweet joy in feeling that *He* knows *all*, and, notwithstanding, loves us still' ([1894]/1931:16). In similar vein, John of the Cross highlights the importance of the 'virtue of humility' by qualifying the authenticity of the 'communications produced by secret contemplation', as follows: '[c]ommunications that are truly from God have this trait: They simultaneously exalt and humble the soul' (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:454). It is within the context of the disclosure of sinfulness that *discernment*,<sup>196</sup> the third mystical element, is suggested. The divine light

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<sup>196</sup> Various tried and tested spiritual disciplines have been introduced by masters of discernment such as Ignatius of Loyola and John of the Cross to discern the good spirit from the bad. Galilea (1996:15) elaborates that Ignatius emphasises 'making a choice for God's service' – with reference to the apostolate – while John is helpful on 'communion' and contemplation (1996:15). Both fundamentally agree that 'the most subtle and dangerous temptation in spiritual persons is that which occurs under the appearance of good. By this means, the devil deceives and obscures discernment'; therefore discerning 'the good spirit from the bad (temptation)' is necessary in the process (1996:15). Discernment requires 'a predisposition of interior freedom, a progressive interior liberation from sins and deliberate faults, from inordinate affections and attachments, and from passions

exposes the beloved's 'little negligences', and she begins to see with 'new eyes' the 'mistake' of neglecting her own vineyard, which Taylor interprets as the 'sin of neglected communion' ([1894]/1931:16-17). Discernment is essential based on Taylor's caution of the detrimental effect of excessive activism in mission:

... the intense activity of our times may lead to zeal in service, to the neglect of personal communion; but such neglect will not only lessen the value of the service but tend to incapacitate us for the highest service ([1894]/1931:16).

The implication is that constant communion with the Beloved empowers us for 'the highest service', which is to serve the purpose of divine love. Mixing metaphors from the Song of Songs with ministerial and missional implications, 'heart-union' is described as oneness with the 'GOOD SHEPHERD' in 'feeding the flock'; and treading in the footsteps of 'the one her soul loves' ensures that the pastoral labour is not done alone, but in companionship with her Beloved. Similarly, 'heart-oneness' is manifested as an instinctive response to 'feeding His sheep' and 'caring for His lambs' (with reference to John 21:15-17); here, the presence of the 'CHIEF SHEPHERD' is a joy (the beloved enjoys the 'tokens of his approval'), which results in 'service *with* Jesus as well as *for* Jesus' ([1894]/1931:17-18).<sup>197</sup> Soul love is therefore a vital connection of attuning to the Bridegroom's own heart-felt delight in us, which represents an inner spiritual empowerment. Reciprocal communion also stirs the divine lover's own 'heart-love', bestowing special revelations of himself on the beloved, as well as affirmations of her beauty. Not only is she 'beautiful and useful to her Lord, she is also adorned' with the delight of the 'Royal Bridegroom', which underscores the uniqueness of her vineyard in the reciprocity and intimacy of communion ([1894]/1931:17-21). In contrast to neglect, by *being* and abiding, the source becomes the primary agent of *doing*, of spiritual fruitfulness, and of lasting good:

Let us never forget that what we are is more important than what we do; and that all fruit borne when not abiding in CHRIST must be fruit of the flesh, and not of the SPIRIT (Taylor [1894]/1931:17).

Through the practice of discernment, the third corollary for soul love is encapsulated as '*be watchful over your own soul*',<sup>198</sup> especially when one has the responsibility of caring for other

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and tendencies that generally obscure and condition discernment' (1996:14-15). Interior freedom for Ignatius corresponds with the term "indifference", and for John, the "nothings" (*nadas*) (1996:15).

<sup>197</sup> The contrast is 'self-will and disunion', which renders the church powerless to touch the 'heathen nations', leaving them in the power of the 'wicked one' (Taylor [1894]/1931:20).

<sup>198</sup> Citing Mt 10:39 and Gal 2:20, Bernard suggests that the person who 'seeks not the advancement of his own interests, or that which is of advantage to himself, but that which is useful and beneficial to many' is fit and worthy to be a keeper over the vineyards of others, while caring for his/her own vineyard with diligence (Eales [1895]/1984:197).

souls. Caring for one's own vineyard',<sup>199</sup> interpreted as 'herself' ([1894]/1931:80), is necessary to avoid incapacitating one's ministry.<sup>200</sup> Here Taylor highlights the danger of being critical of others while overlooking personal faults, which leads to 'powerlessness in helping others as well as disappointment in our powerlessness' ([1894]/1931:16). Galilea highlights one of 'the most radical distortions of ministry', which is 'putting one's entire soul into the means of organizing and doing the action of ministry, while at the same time forgetting God who is its source' (1996:25). The danger is that the spiritual life might devolve into 'mediocrity, tepidity, and stagnation', and a lack of 'true fervor or progress' (1996:9).<sup>201</sup> He suggests that when the signs of incongruity between *being* and *doing* intensify, it is crucial to discern the 'demon of activism' because '[e]xcessive activity or neglect of renewal creates a vicious circle':

The increase in activity makes it increasingly difficult to take measures for interior renewal that lead to growth in "being." On the other hand, the increasing incapacity for renewing oneself tends to be compensated for and disguised by surrendering to uncontrollable activity. In the end, activism is the excuse for "escapism" (1996:26).

Being watchful over one's own soul is also essential in the growth of self-knowledge and true humility, which impacts on life-giving decisions and life-affirming actions.<sup>202</sup> This is a stark contrast to personal neglect, false humility, melancholy, and introspection. Being watchful therefore maintains a conscious awareness of the gracious source of life and ministry, which Taylor accentuates in relation to the presence and person of Christ:

It is in His presence and through His grace that whatever of fragrance or beauty may be found in us comes forth. Of Him as its source, through Him as its instrument, and to Him as its end, is all that is gracious and divine. But HE HIMSELF is better far than all that His grace works in us ([1894]/1931:21).<sup>203</sup>

Rather than being fixated on our failures and overwhelmed by the inconsistency of our own love, the exhortation to 'Abide in Me, and I in you' (John 15) is a life-giving commandment to

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<sup>199</sup> The vineyard is an important transformative motif across the eight chapters of the Song – from a neglected vineyard to a generative one (Lam 2012). It is also an apt mystical symbol for union with Christ, and a motif that runs through Scripture, from Isaiah, through the Song, and culminating in the True Vine (2012).

<sup>200</sup> The topic of burnout does not feature in Taylor's commentary; and will be briefly discussed in the next chapter in the context of his personal transformation and the Exchanged Life.

<sup>201</sup> Mediocrity is accompanied by several signs: lack of personal renewal; prayer is inadequate and poor; no prolonged periods of solitude and retreat; study and reading are not cultivated; time is not set aside to rest sufficiently and recover, etc. (Galilea 1996:25).

<sup>202</sup> Activism is also expressed in tempo, of acting too quickly; 'God's rhythm is a constant but slow process. Human beings (like plants and the rest of creation) do not change or grow with starts and stops, artificially skipping stages. We must wait and be patient ...' (1996:26).

<sup>203</sup> If ministry is fundamentally 'God's "profession" made flesh, and not a human occupation', Jesus is the only minister, the model and the source; it is necessary for human beings as chosen ones, messengers and instruments in imitation of Christ to discern the good spirit of ministry, the inconsistencies and temptations, the evil spirit, and demons common in ministry (1996:21).

remain in the constancy of divine love ([1894]/1931:27). By gazing on God, we abide in the loving gaze of God; by delighting in divine beauty and contemplating like Moses the glory of God, we are transformed into the divine image and reflect ‘as a mirror’ the beauty of the Bridegroom ([1894]/1931:22-23).<sup>204</sup> The gaze is further enhanced by the contrast between the hawk and the dove;<sup>205</sup> the eyes of the former are ‘quick and penetrating’; however, the Bridegroom ‘admires’ in us the ‘tender eyes of the innocent dove’, as well as the ‘dove-like character’ of the Holy Spirit, not a ‘warlike spirit’ ([1894]/1931:23-24). Gazing upon God is thus associated with the practice of contemplation and effects deepening intimacy between lover and Beloved:

Well it is when our eyes are filled with beauty and our hearts are occupied with Him. In the measure in which this is true of us we shall recognize its correlative truth that His great heart is occupied with us ([1894]/1931:22).

Section I ends with the beloved’s experience of ‘refreshment and rest’, enjoying ‘the sweet intimacies of mutual love’, and cherishing ‘the blessedness of being possessed’; it clearly demonstrates the beloved’s transformation from initial fear, unrest, distrust, and ignorance of God to ‘her right and enjoyment’ of ‘heart-rest’, which is the Bridegroom’s desire and will for her ([1894]/1931:26-27).

#### 3.4.4 *Desolation through worldliness ([1894]/1931:27-37): Be careful of little seductions*

The beloved’s eventual satisfaction and rest ‘in the arms of her Beloved’ in the previous section would suggest that their union was ‘so complete’ and her ‘satisfaction so full’ that it ‘would never be interrupted by failure’ ([1894]/1931:27-28). However, Section II (based on Sg 2:8-3:5) describes the experience of ‘*desolation*’ and broken communion with Christ, including the beloved’s intense search in the first ‘night’ of the Song. The primary causes for her desolation are drifting back into ‘a state of worldliness’ and ‘inexperience’, as she had not yet learned that ‘worldliness is an absolute bar to full communion’. Thus, instead of enjoying the light of the divine presence and ‘leaning upon His arm’ ([1894]/1931:34-35), she is left ‘alone, desolate

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<sup>204</sup> Taylor uses the word ‘contemplation’ with reference to the ‘contemplation of the Divine glory’, which effectively transformed Moses’ countenance; he also employs the mirror image to illustrate the human reflection of divine glory, of being ‘transformed into the same image from glory to glory ... even as from the Lord the SPIRIT’ [1894]/1931:22-23).

<sup>205</sup> Taylor does not cite ‘The Bridegroom’s Dove’ in his commentary, a poem based on Sg 2:4 by an unknown author; however, his handwritten copy (cf. Appendix of this research) is worth noting, and is stored in the CIM Archives, SOAS. The poem yearns for the ‘wings that faith supplies’ to hide securely in the Bridegroom’s love; and for a ‘dove-like character’ which is ‘pure, harmless, gentle, full of love’ – qualities that Taylor encouraged in his teaching.

and in the dark' because 'her Beloved could not follow her there' (1894]/1931:28-30, 70).<sup>206</sup> Following her experiences of ebullience, satisfaction, and rest in the previous section, several reasons that caused her drifting back into 'worldly ways' and 'self-willed indulgence' are elaborated, namely: the deceitfulness of sin; carelessness toward the divine desire; foolishness concerning the limits of previous satisfaction; tardiness in obedience; overly comfortable in her state of restfulness, union, security, and new-found joy; letting her guard down with regard to keeping herself 'free of idols'; unaware of 'the strong currents which naturally pull the boat downstream to follow its course' ([1894]/1931:33-35).

From the divine perspective, the desolation of the night is not an end in itself; however, it is necessary for the humbling and strengthening of the soul. With the assurance of Jesus' promise that he 'will never leave me nor forsake me', Taylor asserts that 'failure is never on His side' ([1894]/1931:27-28). Thus, in the first night (Sg 2:8-13), the divine lover comes in search of the beloved 'without reproach'; 'with tender and touching words He woos her'; and calls out with 'loving entreaties that sink deep in her memory' ([1894]/1931:31). Though hidden, the loving presence of the divine remains a constant invitation in the night, which Taylor exclaims, as follows: 'Wonderful thought! That God should desire fellowship with us ... let us notice, it is not here the bride longing in vain for her Lord, but the Bridegroom who is seeking for her' ([1894]/1931:32). These mystical statements resonate with John of the Cross' teaching on God as 'primary agent' in guiding the soul along its journey toward union, as follows: 'In the first place it should be known that if anyone is seeking God, the Beloved is seeking that person much more' (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:684).<sup>207</sup> John's poetry transposes the Song,<sup>208</sup> and depicts the beloved as going out into the night, 'out of love for him, aflamed in his love, wounded because of Another, and brought, and found' (Matthew 1995:49).

On the divine Beloved's search, Taylor laments 'Alas that He should seek in vain!', and draws on the suffering/glory motif of Christ's humanity: 'He whose love once made Him the

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<sup>206</sup>As a comparison, Bernard suggests that the muted response and non-return of the Bridegroom is to increase the yearning for the divine presence, so that 'the affection may be proved, [and] the faculty of love may be exercised. It is not indignation, then, that actuates Him, but a concealment of love' (Eales [1895]/1984:461), which is nevertheless painful for the beloved. The loving Bride is to search with increased earnestness and desire for the one her soul loves. By going into the night in search of her Beloved, the idea is 'not to be turned by any reason from following His footsteps, nor daunted by any difficulty; not to be held back by the love of ease and repose, by the sensitive modesty of a bride, nor by the terrors of the night!' ([1895]/1984:461).

<sup>207</sup> John of the Cross, in *The Living Flame of Love*, 3:28-64 (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:684-701), places the accent on God as 'the principal agent' in the journey of the soul, 'leading it by the hand to the place it knows not how to reach'; this is a caution for the ministry of spiritual direction, that people be careful when entrusting themselves to 'blind guides'; John states three requirements for a spiritual guide, namely: knowledge, discretion, and experience. He also discusses 'the devil' and 'the soul itself' as two other blind guides (1991:684-701).

<sup>208</sup> Both of John's mystical poems *The Dark Night* (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:358-360) and *The Spiritual Canticle* (1991:471-477) reflect the love between bridegroom and bride, based on his relationship with Christ.

Man of Sorrows may now be made the Man of Joys by the loving devotion of human hearts' ([1894]/1931:32).<sup>209</sup> Invoking a wholehearted human response, Taylor employs the metaphor of 'the little foxes that spoil the vineyard' to caution against 'small' enemies which cause great 'mischief', that spoil and even destroy the fruitfulness of the whole branch ([1894]/1931:32-33). Within a missionary context, the small enemies/temptations include little compromises with the world; disobedience to the still small voice in little things; little indulgences of the flesh to the neglect of duty; little strokes of policy; doing evil in little things that good may come; etc. ([1894]/1931:33). In sum, worldliness lures one from the 'true object of our soul's devotion' and diminishes one's entire consecration to Christ and one's witness in the world ([1894]/1931:36).

Given the subtle danger of these temptations to union and communion, the fourth corollary in cultivating soul love is '*be careful of little seductions*', as these lead to a movement away from God and cause the sense of desolation. On the human/existential level, what are appropriate ways of confronting the little seductions in order that one's devotion to Christ remains pure? Raising a caution on 'two great enemies: the world and self', Murray highlights the danger of 'little things', as follows: 'Pleasing self in little things may be strengthening it to assert itself in greater things' (1998:307). This caution includes the deceptive potential of spiritual exercises which often replace the God-focus, as follows: 'Let not the interest of spiritual thoughts and exercises deceive you; they very often take the place of waiting upon God' (1998:307). Stated differently, when comfort and consolations become an end in itself, communion is invariably broken, hence the purifying work of the Spirit in the night.

Matthew's elucidation of John of the Cross' '*night of sense*' is helpful at this point with regard to self-indulgence, self-gratification, and small-mindedness; in particular, the 'inwardly centred desire', limited to and even enslaved by the senses, which 'closes up the space for communion' (1995:42). In this context, denial means freeing oneself from 'dependence on the thing or the person'; consequently, by not filling the gap with some other novelty, we are freed to live in 'genuine communion' rather than 'as a consumer among objects', which is akin to worldliness (1995:43-44). The *night of sense* therefore frees one to live at the *level of spirit* 'for a communion of love' and opens an available 'space for the gift of the Other' that allows 'the genuinely new to be disclosed' in its 'unsuspected depth' (1995:44-45).<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> These metaphors might be an echo of the hymn 'Man of Sorrows, What a Name' by Philip Bliss (1838-1876), which has an alternative title, 'Hallelujah, What a Saviour' (cf. [https://hymnary.org/person/Bliss\\_Philip](https://hymnary.org/person/Bliss_Philip))

<sup>210</sup> Matthew (1995:43) elucidates John of the Cross' use of two 'qualities', or levels, of 'sense' and of 'spirit', which are borrowed from the apostle Paul; the level of 'sense' refers to the sensory side (including body and emotions), where a person is being held 'hostage to his or her own needs' and is enslaved to the 'sensual'

Taylor's exhortation is to keep one's life clear of the little foxes which interrupt communion, by abiding, cleansing, forsaking, and worshipping. Citing John 15 and Psalm 45, he elaborates as follows: abide in the true Vine; be cleansed by the Word; forsake earthly ties; and worship the King and Lord who greatly desires the beloved's beauty ([1894]/1931:28). This exhortation resonates with Matthew's insights on the *night of sense* (1995:49) in the following respects: to 'live out of the horizon of God's love' (dwelling or abiding), we 'transcend our mediocrity' (through worship); and by saying *no* to constant gratification (cleansed by the Word), we say *yes* to 'the greater love, even when it costs' (forsaking earthly ties). Thus, we are saved from self-preoccupation and the lure of little seductions.

#### 3.4.5 *Delight of intimacy* ([1894]/1931:37-46): *Be holy/wholly for the Beloved*

Taylor reiterates in Section III (based on Sg 3:6-5:1) that separation and absence are never attributed to the Bridegroom. On the contrary, 'He is always ready for communion with a prepared heart' ([1894]/1931:41). This section takes a new turn, disclosing in unsuspected depth 'the gift of the Other'; or, as Taylor explicates: the previous sections were mainly concerned with the bride; here, the attention is 'first called to the Bridegroom and then it is from Himself that we hear of the bride, as the object of His love, and the delight of His heart' ([1894]/1931:37). Eclipsed in the grandeur and the state of her royal Bridegroom, and 'reflecting like a mirror the beauty of the Bridegroom' ([1894]/1931:38-40), the 'wondrous working of the HOLY SPIRIT' transforms the beloved in the divine image, 'from one degree of glory to another', and effects a conformity in likeness, becoming 'ever fairer, and more like to her Lord' ([1894]/1931:41).<sup>211</sup> It is worth noting that the word '*bride*' (Sg 4:8-12; 5:1) is used here for the first time in the Song, which is described as being wholly devoted to the Beloved. She is 'not occupied with Him for her *own* sake'; 'her mouth or speech ... has no word of self, or for self'; she is wholly focused on who she may be for her Beloved, and 'rejoices in His joy in finding in her *His* satisfaction' ([1894]/1931:39-40). Within this poetic ambience of 'sweetness most ineffable'<sup>212</sup> and the exuberant celebration of mutuality,<sup>213</sup>

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(1995:44); however, when a person chooses not to fill the hole with sensation, but is patient to see it through, life can transfer on to a new level, which John calls 'spirit' (1995:44).

<sup>211</sup> In his discussion on the divine-human process of transformation, Waaijman (2002:510-514) suggests that the spiritual life occurs between two poles, namely: created in God's image (the starting point) and complete conformity in likeness to God (the end point).

<sup>212</sup> This phrase, which Taylor cites as an introduction to Section III ([1894]/1931:37), is based on Bernard of Clairvaux's hymn, 'O Jesu, King most wonderful'.

<sup>213</sup> Ruffing notes the importance of mutuality with God in the mystical tradition (2000:125-154); she advocates the 'rediscovery' of this neglected theme in the practice of spiritual direction, as it pertains to 'transforming union', developing intimacy and mutuality in the mature stages of the spiritual life, and healing the 'negative or

'delight' is identified as the fourth element. It is fitting that Taylor sums up this 'beautiful' third section as 'a picture of unbroken communion and its delightful issues' ([1894]/1931:46).

Concerning 'spiritual marriage' (inferred by the term 'bride'), his supposition is that the beloved is now '*fit for service*' [sic] and 'ready for any experience' ([1894]/1931:41, 45); thus viewing this stage of spiritual maturation through the lens of missionary spirituality. The prevalence of the word '*all*' in this section is an indication of her spiritual maturation – from an initial dissatisfied, distrustful, neglected, and egocentric state to a wholehearted self-giving:

... one with the KING, then speaking of the KING; the joy of communion leading to fellowship in service, to a being *all* for JESUS, ready for any experience that will fit for further service, surrendering *all* to Him, and willing to minister *all* for Him. There is no room for love of the world here, for union with CHRIST has filled the heart; there is nothing for the gratification of the world, for *all* has been sealed and is kept for the MASTER'S use ([1894]/1931:42, italics added for emphasis).<sup>214</sup>

In similar vein, Taylor distinguishes between the 'beloved' – one who desires that God be 'all in all' – and the 'daughters of Jerusalem' to whom Christ is 'not all in all'; they do not 'count all things as loss for the sake of Christ', but are concerned instead with their own interests and comforts, and 'outward and earthly things'; and are never 'occupied with the *person* of the Bridegroom' ([1894]/1931:83-84).<sup>215</sup> Intimacy with Bridegroom is thus inextricably linked to Taylor's missiological application; here he asserts that the Beloved's heart is ravished by the one who is 'prepared to accept His invitation, and go forth with Him seeking to rescue the perishing!' ([1894]/1931:45). Furthermore, with reference to Sg 4:8, he interprets 'Come with Me from Lebanon, my bride' through the lens of the Great Commission, suggesting that 'it is *in connection with this loving invitation* that for the first time He changes the word "My love," for the still more endearing one, "My bride"' ([1894]/1931:42). Taylor's rationale is that the loving invitation ("Come with me") and Christ's enduring presence ("Lo I am with you always") are prerequisites for 'Go ye therefore'. In other words, the call to 'come' precedes the commission to 'go'; and even in the going, 'it is still "with Me"' ([1894]/1931:42).<sup>216</sup> To accentuate the point of union and communion, the following threefold imperative may be aptly

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inaccurate' images that both men and women maintain of God and self, which result in 'unjust social relations on the human plane' and 'emotional distance between God and humans'.

<sup>214</sup> Throughout Taylor's commentary, he capitalises references to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

<sup>215</sup> The daughters of Jerusalem represent those who are 'not actually saved, [yet] are very near it; or, if saved, only half-saved' (Taylor [1894]/1931:84), an interpretation which Nee adopts in his devotional commentary on the Song, as follows: 'begotten of God', 'but 'not very seeking', 'a cold, ignorant, and careless group of people' ([1945]/1993:15). Elsewhere, in an address to CIM missionaries, these salvific statements refer to the experiential rather than the doctrinal: 'very often .. we are only half saved ourselves. If we are fully saved, and confess it, we shall see results' (Taylor, in Beauchamp 1890:113).

<sup>216</sup> The importance of 'come with me' as a prerequisite for 'go' is cited also in Beauchamp (1890:77, 83-84).

applied: ‘come with me’; ‘be with me’; and ‘go with me’. The interposing of ‘be with me’, based on Mk 3:14, is imperative because *being with* Jesus precedes the sending and going. Following Hernandez, the calling to be with Christ is ‘an invitation to *communion*’ – both an individual and a corporate call; and it is ‘out of this process of being in communion with Jesus and experiencing community with each other’ that the Great Commission is given and perpetuated (2008:57). The themes of abiding and intimacy are also well captured in Hernandez’ discussion of communion, which simply means ‘to be with and to stay in God’s divine presence;’ while to ‘remain in his love’ (Jn 15), is ‘an invitation to a total belonging, to full intimacy, to an unlimited being-with’ (2008:57).<sup>217</sup>

In light of the personal and communal impact of mutuality on missionary spirituality, the cultivation of soul love in this section is identified as ‘*be holy/wholly for the Beloved*’, which is inferred by ‘the consecration of all’ (Taylor [1894]/1931:45). It is underscored also by Taylor’s pertinent insight into *being* and *doing* as a reflection of holiness and wholeness:

Do we sufficiently cultivate this unselfish desire to *be all* for Jesus, and to *do all* for His pleasure? ... How much of prayer there is that begins and ends with the creature, forgetful of the privilege of giving joy to the Creator! ([1894]/1931:40, italics added for emphasis).

For the creature to *be all* and *do all* for the Creator’s pleasure, several natural metaphors from the Song’s poetic garden illustrate the integration of holiness/wholeness and, by extension, being holy/wholly for the Beloved. In relation to holiness, the bride’s ‘embodied soul’<sup>218</sup> may be regarded as a private paradise of precious fruits and delightful perfumes for her Lord, an enclosed garden for Himself alone; a spring shut up; and a sealed fountain ([1894]/1931:44); in nuce, a sacred space to contain the depth of joy from the ‘sweet communications of His love’, which causes the bride to remain ‘silent in her love’ ([1894]/1931:43, 41). Compared also to ‘a well of living waters and flowing streams from Lebanon’, her ‘ensouled body’<sup>219</sup> is fertile, fecund and generative, which is indicative of wholeness; thus, the fruit borne brings blessing to many, and ‘imparts refreshment wherever she goes; and yet it is all of Him and for Him’ ([1894]/1931:44). Cultivating soul love is essentially then a form of holy conservation, whereby we give ourselves unselfishly and wholeheartedly in loving devotion to the Beloved, so that ‘His heart can feel full satisfaction’ ([1894]/1931:40); in turn, the ‘consecration of all’ actually ‘increases’ rather than diminishes our power and joy in ministry ([1894]/1931:45).

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<sup>217</sup> Hernandez (2008:57) cites Nouwen’s *Sabbatical Journey* (1998:165).

<sup>218</sup> Cited in 3.2.1, Hernandez (2008:9) describes the human being as an ‘embodied soul’.

<sup>219</sup> Cited in 3.2.1, Hernandez (2008:9) describes the human being alternatively as an ‘ensouled body’.

Section III culminates in Havergal's hymn 'Jesus, my life is Thine! ... nothing can untwine Thy life from mine' ([1894]/1931:46), which suggests that the inseparable union (or spiritual marriage) is the crux of soul love.

#### 3.4.6 *Darkness through complacency ([1894]/1931:47-58): Be humbled by mystery*

In Section IV (based on Sg 5:2-6:10), communion is broken again; here, the loss of the 'comfort and presence of the Bridegroom' is a deeper and more painful experience than the previous night of desolation; hence the term '*darkness*' to describe the second night. In comparison, Taylor describes her first 'relapse into worldliness' as one of 'inexperience'; and the second as being tardy in obedience and failing to respond because of 'slothful self-indulgence', 'spiritual pride,' and 'slothful ease' ([1894]/1931:47, 52, 58). These descriptions of the bride's condition of soul are thus encapsulated as '*complacency*'.

Though she is still 'a garden shut up, a fountain sealed' as far as 'the world [is] concerned', Taylor asserts that she was 'unconscious of her declension' and was not desirous or expectant of the Beloved's presence ([1894]/1931:47-48). Therefore, 'the snare' here in the darkness is 'more dangerous and insidious because it was quite unsuspected'; which makes restoration more difficult ([1894]/1931:48, 71). What is the main issue that precipitated a mediocre response to the divine visitation? According to Taylor, it is not the bride's '*position*', but rather 'her *condition* of self-satisfaction and love of ease' ([1894]/1931:49-50). Inattentive and unresponsive, the tardy bride was left alone in the darkness, while 'the grieved One had withdrawn Himself before she was ready to receive Him ([1894]/1931:51).

With regard to Sg 5:2-3, the divine lover knocking at her door, imploring her to 'Open to Me, My sister, My love, My dove, My undefiled', Taylor views this invitation on the one hand as the most 'touching entreaty in the Word of GOD', which is amplified by 'My head is filled with dew, My locks with the drops of the night' ([1894]/1931:49-50). On the other hand, these touching statements are saturated with pathos, as Taylor laments the fact that the Beloved stands outside a closed door, needing to 'knock in vain at the door of [a] heart which has become His own' ([1894]/1931:49). Once again, employing a missiological lens to the Song,<sup>220</sup> he interprets the Beloved's 'head ... filled with dew' as representing 'a shepherd-heart', who '*must* seek the wandering sheep until the lost one has been found'; which leads him to question whether the bride, after her recent experiences of closeness to the Beloved and courage in the face of danger, would 'leave Him to seek alone the wandering and the lost?' ([1894]/1931:50).

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<sup>220</sup> Taylor's message on Song 5, in 1886, adopts a similar missiological interpretation (Beauchamp 1890:72-74).

Related to this existential question, the corollary for soul love in the second dark night is delineated as *'be humbled by mystery'*. The rationale is that the present search is a deeper one, which does not necessarily stem from a 'sense of failure and wounded pride', but from a drawing closer to God who discloses 'the depths of our sinfulness' (Louth [1981]/2007:180). In this stage of deeper darkness, Taylor observes one possible and one probable cause for 'spiritual pride', as follows: taking pride in 'the achievements which grace enabled her to accomplish', and 'a cherished satisfaction in the *blessing* she had received, instead of in the BLESSER Himself' ([1894]/1931:47). In other words, the success of accomplishments and the sweetness of consolations distracted her from grace (the means) and the Beloved (the source), resulting in the pathos of 'slothful self-indulgence' ([1894]/1931:47).

On the humbling and purifying effect of the dark night, John of the Cross describes contemplation as 'an inflow of God into the soul ... [which] purges it of its habitual ignorances and imperfections, natural and spiritual' (Louth [1981]/2007:179).<sup>221</sup> He alludes to the danger of spiritual pride in human achievement by clarifying that 'the road of contemplation' is not a deliberate, purposeful exercise 'in the way of the spirit', for it is God who knows best and weans the soul in its affections according to the seasons of their journey (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:380). God might thus call people in the dark night 'to relinquish ways of prayer and devotion that give satisfaction in themselves and, out of love for God Himself, to enter the night of contemplation' (Louth [1981]/2007:179).<sup>222</sup> This night is an 'illuminating and purifying presence of divine *light*' ([1981]/2007:179); and the divine purpose is 'to exercise and humble them, and reform their appetite lest in their spiritual life they foster a harmful attraction toward sweetness' (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:380).

Purification in the darkness is thus a conduit for Mystery (not a psychological state of depression),<sup>223</sup> and one of the effects is humility. With reference to the beloved's forlorn and 'sorrow-stricken' state, 'wounded, dishonoured' and 'almost in despair', her experience is evidently both humility and humiliation; moreover, she is not recognized by others as 'the bride

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<sup>221</sup> Citing Book II, Chapter 5, v.1-2 of the *Dark Night* (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:401).

<sup>222</sup> Though consolations given by God are good, when they become an end in themselves, a different type of prayer is needed; for example, the change from discursive meditation (active) to contemplation (passive). On the difference between 'acquired contemplation' and 'infused contemplation', the former is acquired through 'ordinary' grace, asceticism, and psychological concentration, and the latter refers to that which God makes known to the individual 'through a special grace beyond all human effort' (Egan 2010:xvii).

<sup>223</sup> In *The Dark Night* Book I, Chapters 9-12, John discusses three signs that the soul is in this season of purification (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:377-380). May summarises these as follows: first, 'Dryness and Impotence in Prayer and Life'; second, 'Lack of Desire for the Old Ways'; and third, 'A Simple Desire to Love God' (2004:136-142). He also clarifies the difference between the dark night and depression, and advocates for psychological and psychiatric treatment where necessary (2004:155-159).

of the King, though her personal beauty' is still apparent (Taylor [1894]/1931:53). The redemptive feature in the painful dark night is that she still has a desire for God and a capacity to respond; or as Taylor states, she still has an ear to hear the music 'that awakened echoes in her soul such as no other voice could have stirred'; in other words her soul is tender and may still be stirred 'to its deepest depths ([1894]/1931:48, 54). From the divine perspective, the door remains open; and once she acknowledges herself as the Bridegroom's 'rightful possession', which she had 'practically repudiated' through her tardiness and rejection, the Beloved responds with 'no upbraiding word, but in tenderest love, tells her how beautiful she is in His eyes' ([1894]/1931:57). The significance of this dynamic human-divine interaction is not romantic sentimentality, but rather that true humility teaches *Otherness* (and purges spiritual pride). With reference to Sg 7:10 ('I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me'), otherness might be aptly interpreted as a 'further development of grace', which is the recognition of her true identity as 'His rightful possession'; here Taylor highlights the contrast with Sg 2:16 ('My Beloved is mine, and I am His'), which signifies a shift from the beloved's claim upon her Beloved to the primacy and priority of his claim upon her ([1894]/1931:56).

Having cleared personal space for genuine communion with the Other, a further growth in humility is attuning one's heart to the mystery of the divine desire, which effects a deeper sense of mutuality in love and partnership (compared with the previous section, 3.3.5 above). In this section, the beloved's discovery that 'His desire is toward me' is a realisation of or an awakening to the divine desire as the ontological attraction of the human heart ([1894]/1931:57); this is an important awakening to mutuality in the mature stages of the journey.<sup>224</sup> As Ruffing states, 'God increases our capacity for God so that relational mutuality becomes possible' (2000:128). Mutuality though, does not refer to 'an ontological equality', or sharing in 'the same *being*'; nor does it deny transcendence and the numinous sense of God as powerful Other (2000:128). What the process of mystical transformation gradually effects is 'this sense of the utter Otherness of God in favour of a radical mutuality with God' (2000:126).

In this particular section, the mutuality of soul love and partnership with the Bridegroom in mission go hand-in-glove. For example, on the bride's 'soul-ravishing description of the glory and beauty of the Lord' ([1894]/1931:54), Taylor adds that it is her desire is that it would attract others to seek the Beloved with her (notably, the daughters of Jerusalem), so that 'they

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<sup>224</sup> The mutual regard and intertwined desire of the lovers is 'a celebratory phenomenon' (Lam 2012:74), as the Song reverses the distortion of the Garden of Eden and restores the original symmetry between woman and man (Davis 2000:294). The word desire '(teshuqah)', as Davis elucidates, is 'a rare and radical usage', which occurs in only two other places in the Bible (Gen 3:16; 4:7); its use in this context is 'literally radical', as it 'probes the roots (Latin, *radices*) of God's intention for human beings' (2000:294).

also may behold His beauty' ([1894]/1931:57). By extension, loving companionship with and personal fidelity to the Bridegroom impacts positively on ministry, where people treat each other as friends and companions ([1894]/1931:43). Soul love is also manifested in a life of sacrifice and self-denial (furthering signs of humility); in contrast, an inward-looking spirituality emphasises personal sanctification to the neglect of mission. Taylor critiques this latter point in several ways. First, the habit of merely relaxing in the blessing, without joining the blesser in concern for other people ([1894]/1931:51). Second, feasting on conferences and conventions,<sup>225</sup> and finding 'delight in the rest of faith, while forgetting to fight the good fight of faith' ([1894]/1931:50). Third, by dwelling upon 'the cleansing and the purity effected by faith', they give 'little thought for the poor souls struggling in the mire of sin' ([1894]/1931:50). It is in this context of soul love and self-sacrifice that Taylor highlights metaphors for Christ, such as the 'King of Love' ([1894]/1931:55)<sup>226</sup> and 'the CHIEFEST among ten thousand'.<sup>227</sup> By way of application (addressing the CIM conference in Shanxi, July 1886), Taylor cites the bride's adulation (in Sg 5:16b) to invoke reflection on who Jesus is '*personally*' to each one, and as their all-sufficiency for '*service*' (Beauchamp 1890:91):

Am I so apprehending CHRIST? Is my heart overwhelmed, and overflowing with the fullness I have in Him, so that like the Bride in the Song we cannot but say, "This is my BELOVED, this is my Lord, the CHIEFEST among ten thousand?" (1890:91).<sup>228</sup>

In that spirit of affective humility before the revealed Mystery, who is Christ the Beloved, Section IV culminates with communion restored, the bride reinstated, and the Bridegroom openly acknowledging her as 'His own peerless companion and friend' ([1894]/1931:58). In sum, this section demonstrates that the painful experience of darkness is 'fraught with lasting good' ([1894]/1931:58) and is therefore to be embraced rather than negated. The lasting good, is that the night leads to 'the "new self", divinized in being and operation, living now a life of faith, hope and love, fortified and pure' (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:356).<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Taylor previously made specific reference to 'Holiness Conventions and Workers' Conferences' (Beauchamp 1890:74). The influence of the Holiness Movement on Taylor and the CIM will be elaborated in the next chapter.

<sup>226</sup> Other metaphors for Christ are also elaborated at this point, namely: 'The Ancient of Days' (Daniel 7:9-10); the 'Son of Man' (Rev 1:13-16); the visions of John in Revelation; and Paul's Road to Damascus experience (Taylor [1894]/1931:54-55).

<sup>227</sup> Cited in Taylor's message on 'Rely on Christ Alone' (Beauchamp 1890:72-74).

<sup>228</sup> In a different context, in failing health in June 1860, just prior to returning to England for the first time since his arrival in China in 1854, Taylor's letter to his parents cites the phrase 'Saviour, Lover, Friend' to express the near presence of Jesus, who 'knows all' and who 'does all things well' (Taylor & Taylor [1911]/2005:517).

<sup>229</sup> Smedes clarifies that the 'Christ-life is not a new substance added to the soul', or 'the addition of a spiritual superstructure on the human personality'; nor does it 'dissolve our humanity' ([1970]/1983:116-117). 'When we are given a share in the divine life, something *happens* to our souls, and, by its effect, to our entire life. It begins

### 3.4.7 *Dignity of creation* ([1894]/1931:58-69): *Be nurtured by beauty*

Section V (based on Sg 6:2-8:4), entitled ‘The Fruits of Recognised Union’, highlights the beloved’s consciousness of a new or transformed self – and a reverential awe for her graced life. The element of ‘*dignity*’ is therefore identified in this section, based on the bestowal of a new name ‘the Shulamite’, the feminine form of ‘Solomon’; as well as several accolades conferred on her as ‘the chosen, though unworthy bride of the glorious KING’; of royal birth; the ‘Prince’s daughter’; and graced with ‘queenly dignity’ ([1894]/1931:60-62). This dignity is the effect of grace, not of human striving: ‘It is grace that has made her who she is’; from henceforth, it is ‘none of self or for self, but all of Thee and for Thee’ ([1894]/1931:67-68). Dignity invites cooperation with grace; thus the beloved cares for her own vineyard with diligence, becoming an embodiment of delight for the Beloved: ‘Herself his garden, she does not forget to tend it, nor keep the vineyards of others while her own is neglected’ ([1894]/1931:59). At this stage of ‘uninterrupted communion’, the union between lover and beloved is described as being ‘of one mind’; a union ‘so thorough’ that it is difficult to distinguish the speaker in the Song-text; and, together, they engage in service ([1894]/1931:59-60). These descriptions resonate to some extent with Bernard’s lyrical expression of harmony:

It is not a cry from the mouth, but the gladness of the heart; not the sounding of the lips, but the impulse and emotion of joys within; not a concert of words, but of wills moving in harmony. It is not heard without, nor does it make a sound in the streets. Only she who sings, and He in whose honour it is sung; that is, the Bridegroom and the Bride, hear the accents of that song (Eales [1895]/1984:xv).

In harmony with the divine will, the dignity of a uniquely created life is inextricably tied to the fruitfulness of an embodied life; here, the beloved’s generosity of spirit is tilted outwards in a kind of self-transcendence, compared to her previous stages of self-indulgence. She is attentive to the divine presence without beckoning or wooing; and needs no urging to love God, care for the flock, and arise and go forth to rescue the perishing ([1894]/1931:59). A key term that Taylor uses in this context is ‘*true devotion*’, which is manifested in several ways. First, she realises that her highest good is to satisfy and honour the Beloved with her own love ([1894]/1931:67). Second, instead of proudly dwelling upon what she has done through grace, her focus is on God as the giver ([1894]/1931:68). Third, her desire is ‘to be more to Him’, and

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at the center of our being and works outward’ ([1970]/1983:119). In this sense, the use of the word ‘deification’ for the sacramentalist is ‘a dramatic way of insisting that union with Christ really *changes* a person’ ([1970]/1983:120).

thus would ‘rather ask to be allowed to give’, counting “all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of CHRIST JESUS my Lord”, following the apostle Paul [1894]/1931:68).

The dignity bestowed on the bride evokes the corollary ‘*be nurtured by beauty*’, in celebration of her transformation in beauty and as a form of gratitude to the Creator.<sup>230</sup> Taylor employs several natural images,<sup>231</sup> which intertwine nature/humanness and creation/body. Resembling the palm tree, she is tall, upright, victorious, and ever more fruitful growing heavenward; also graceful, clinging, gentle, and tender as the Vine; a ‘fragrant and evergreen citron’; etc. ([1894]/1931:62-66). These analogies reflect the wonder of creation and the dignity of being human; in particular, a ‘lowly wild flower’ has been beautified by divine ‘graces and virtues’ to show forth the same graces and virtues, and to reflect divine beauty ([1894]/1931:63, 66). Since beauty ‘is an *essential* part of the contemplative life’ (Tyler 2010:100),<sup>232</sup> it follows that being nurtured by beauty involves aesthetic practices which nourish the body and bring pleasure to the Beloved. By way of Taylor’s illustration, the bride feeds on ‘citrons’, which ‘perfumed her breath, and imparted to her their delicious odour’ ([1894]/1931:63).

In the context of mission, the nurture of the soul by beauty results in fruitfulness and refreshment for a ‘weary, thirsty world’. Where soul nurture is sourced by union with the ‘living Vine’,<sup>233</sup> the bride becomes ‘self-forgetful and self-sacrificing, not merely bearing fruit in spite of adversity, but bearing her richest fruits through it’ ([1894]/1931:66). Taylor cites a profound extract from ‘the living Vine’ ([1894]/1931:65) to encapsulate these notions:

The Vine from every living limb bleeds wine;  
Is it poorer for that spirit shed?  
The drunkard and the wanton drink thereof;  
Are they the richer for that gifts’ excess?  
Measure thy life by loss instead of gain;  
Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth;  
For love’s strength standeth in love’s sacrifice;  
And whoso suffers most, hath most to give.

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<sup>230</sup> Beholding oneself in the beauty of the Beloved is a key mystical-transformative element in John of the Cross’ *The Spiritual Canticle* (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:476). Citing the original Spanish terms, Tyler notes that John uses the word ‘beauty’ 192 times in his writing, and ‘beautiful’ 40 times (2010:101).

<sup>231</sup> Appreciation of nature was part and parcel of Taylor’s childhood training: Saturday afternoon walks in the countryside with their father; their mother encouraged the collections of the ‘little naturalists’; the family subscribed to a monthly magazine of natural history; they were taught to cherish creation, and would be ‘severely punished’ for cruelty to ‘helpless creatures’ (Taylor & Taylor [1911]/2005:62-63).

<sup>232</sup> On ‘goodness, truth and beauty, Tyler states that beauty is ‘not divorced from goodness and truth, which would ‘run the risk of transcendental otherworldliness or a superficial romanticism’ (Tyler 2010:100). However, to ‘banish beauty from religion is to empty it of a powerful divine and human component essential to its wholeness’; of the three, ‘beauty is the transcendental that most easily disappears because beauty is so expansive, elusive and ultimately indefinable (2010:100, citing Egan 2000:242).

<sup>233</sup> The extracts originate from a book of verse, entitled *The Disciples*, by Harriet Eleanor Hamilton King (1874:91).

What are the implications then for the cultivation of soul love? To abide in the Vine, the true source of fruitfulness, the culture of the Husbandman or Vinedresser is welcomed as wise and loving, in spite of pain and loss ([1894]/1931:64-65). This is necessary so that the desire to ‘be more’ for the Beloved remains grounded in the soil of humility; it is also consciously nurtured by divine ‘guidance and instruction’, rather than by exercises in self-mastery ([1894]/1931:68). The bride’s intention here is an unreserved giving of her best to the Beloved, fully aware that ‘rest and satisfaction’ are to be found in the divine source of love, not in self-indulgence or misplaced attachments ([1894]/1931:68-69). Finally, the soul will experience weariness along the path; yet, remains centred and secure in ‘perfect, perfect rest’, which is lyrically expressed in the hymn ‘the blessing of the divine arms clasped around me; my head on thy breast’ ([1894]/1931:69).<sup>234</sup> From Taylor’s perspective, ‘nothing [is] sweeter to the Bridegroom or to the bride than this hallowed and unhindered communion’; therefore, he urges people to ‘enjoy it’, abide in Christ, and sing of divine-human intimacy ([1894]/1931:69)

#### 3.4.8 *Detachment in fruitfulness ([1894]/1931:70-82): Be a loving sacrament*

In Section VI, lover and beloved are intertwined and inseparable; their ‘union and communion are now open and manifest’ ([1894]/1931:72), which is the first time that the two terms ‘*union*’ and ‘*communion*’ are combined in the commentary, apart from the title. Though this final section on ‘unrestrained communion’ brings the journey to a close, it also points forward to a continuum of soul rest and satisfaction, as follows: ‘though journeying she is at rest, though in the wilderness she is satisfied, while leaning upon her Beloved’ ([1894]/1931:73).<sup>235</sup> The assertion that this is ‘*no wilderness to the bride*’ because it is ‘sweetly solaced by the presence of the Bridegroom’ ([1894]/1931:72),<sup>236</sup> suggests that unrestrained communion engenders a soulful repose within the multifaceted realities of life. This restful disposition demonstrates the distance the bride has traversed from the initial state of dissatisfaction and neglect of her own

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<sup>234</sup> Section V ends with an extract from the hymn ‘Jesus, I am never weary’ ([1894]/1931:69). By way of comparison, the divine breast and gentle arms are a profound metaphor not only in the mystico-erotic poetics of John of the Cross’ *The Spiritual Canticle* (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:474-475); also in Teresa of Avila’s *Meditations on the Song of Songs*, she expresses the ecstasy of ‘divine intoxication’, of being ‘suspended in those divine arms’, ‘leaning on that sacred side and those divine breasts’, awaking from ‘heavenly inebriation’, stupefied and dazed ‘with a holy madness’ (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1980:244).

<sup>235</sup> The wilderness or ‘desert’ might also be viewed as ‘a gestational period, the place par excellence for encountering divine love and discovering one’s [true] identity’ (Lam 2012:76).

<sup>236</sup> In 1857, while waiting for consent to their marriage from Maria’s maternal uncle in London (she was orphaned at the age of six), Taylor connects ‘wilderness’ and ‘leaning on the Beloved’ in his letter to his sister Amelia from Shanghai, as follows: ‘We need Him to direct our steps ... we need to pass through this wilderness leaning, always leaning on our Beloved. May we in reality do this, and all will be well’ (Taylor & Taylor [1911]/2005:456).

vineyard (personal communion). Now, ‘occupying herself in His vineyard’ ([1894]/1931:72), she carefully nurtures her vineyard in order that it produces much fruit for the Beloved. This transformation also indicates an attunement to the rhythm of ‘ever active, yet ever at rest’, a more contemplative way of being in the world. Since this daily rhythm is essential to a life of fruitful service, the mystical element of *detachment* is apt here. It underscores that one’s *doing* is entirely dependent upon resting, remaining, abiding, and *being* in love. In relation to spiritual fructification, *detachment* may therefore be described as living consciously, yet effortlessly; robustly, yet graciously; self-forgetful, yet giving of oneself – while leaning on the Beloved.<sup>237</sup>

These foregoing qualities go hand-in-glove with Taylor’s references to ‘conscious union’ and ‘conscious oneness’ with the Bridegroom; ‘conscious of having found favour in the eyes of the Beloved’; and a ‘happy consciousness’ that her vineyard should produce much fruit for her Lord ([1894]/1931:77-80). Detachment is evidently a necessary ingredient for mature attachment and loving interdependence (the inner dimension), as it radiates an attractive quality to the outer world; for example, by ‘leaning upon her Beloved’, attention is drawn to ‘His person’ – in contrast to the public display of the King, and the externals of pomp and ceremony (Sg 3:6-11). Moreover, others are attracted ‘by the happy position of the bride in relation to her Beloved, not by their surroundings’ ([1894]/1931:72).<sup>238</sup> This conscious union, also indicated by the phrase ‘in all things she is one with Him’ ([1894]/1931:77) reflects a ‘true synergy’<sup>239</sup> between lover and beloved. Since it the work of ‘love and grace’ ([1894]/1931:76, 77), Taylor places the accent on *being* (effortlessness) rather than on *doing* (effort):

what she *was* (by grace) was more important than what she *did*; and that she did not work in order to earn favour, but being assured of favour, gave her love free scope to show itself in service ([1894]/1931:79-80).

Detachment frees a person from compulsive doing and compensatory activism, in order that God be loved with purified passion and served with unwavering devotion. In this regard, detachment is not ‘cold and unfeeling’, nor ‘ungenerous’; rather, the ‘fire and passion behind’

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<sup>237</sup> Citing Meister Eckhart’s German usage, detachment is understood as an ‘attitude’ (Smith [1987]/2004:94); this spirit ‘stands immovable in all the assaults of joy or sorrow, honour, disgrace or shame ... the immovable detachment brings about in man [sic] the greatest similarity to God’; that is, in relation to God’s purity, simplicity, and immutability ([1987]/2004:95).

<sup>238</sup> Smith comments on ‘piercing through the veils’, that in order to ‘get to the reality, and to the Person behind’ the temporal distortions, detachment involves ‘stripping away the images, peeling away the projections which veil our true nature and God’s’ ([1987]/2004:96-97).

<sup>239</sup> Synergy (*synergos*) is not fundamentally a ‘contrast between the idea of our responding to God and the idea of our working with God’; rather, in finding true freedom in God, we ‘become a fellow-worker (*synergos*) with God’ (Louth [1981]/2007:185). Paul, in Phil 2:12, expresses the paradox well, of our cooperation with God in working out our ‘salvation with fear and trembling’. John of the Cross writes of ‘the soul’s learning to be passive’ in the dark night, and ‘becoming purely transparent to Him’ ([1981]/2007:184).

is ‘the insatiable desire for God which reaches out to its goal and will not be fobbed off with anything less’ (Smith [1987]/2004:96). Taylor quotes the unquenchable fire (Sg 8:6), as follows: ‘The flashes of love are flashes of fire, a very flame of the Lord’; and interprets the only occurrence of the word ‘Lord’ through the biblical assertion (1 John 4:16) that ‘love is of God, and God is love’ ([1894]/1931:75). The bride has learned through experience the vast difference between the ‘inconstancy’ of the human heart and ‘the divine compulsion which retains the cords of love’ ([1894]/1931:74-76, citing Rom 8:35-39). Having developed ‘the trustfulness of confiding love’ and realised that divine love is ‘not a fickle love’, the bride need not fear change. In fact, she is conscious of her need for personal transformation, since it is precisely this love that ‘took her up when she had no comeliness’; ‘made her what she is’; and ‘now takes delights in her’ ([1894]/1931:72-73). Of great significance at this final stage is the affirmation that the divine ‘I AM’ claimed her as ‘His bride from her very birth, and not alone from her espousals’; in other words, the realisation that ‘[b]efore she knew Him, He knew her’ ([1894]/1931:73) symbolises a homecoming, that her unique vineyard (‘I am’)<sup>240</sup> was divinely designed for and created in love. Moving forward, in order that the Beloved remain ‘her all in all’, she is aware of the indispensable need to be ‘bound to the heart and arms of her Beloved’; upheld and carried by an ardent love that is ‘strong as death’; to ‘trust only in that love’; and ‘be sustained only by that power’ ([1894]/1931:74-75).

For a healthy detachment in service, several allusions are identified in Taylor’s exhortations. First, ‘pray to be kept from turning to Egypt for help’; by implication, to resist reliance on former enslavements, trusting in means and methods other than God, and putting confidence in other powers or people ‘rather than in the living God’ ([1894]/1931:75). Second, we are to learn God’s thoughts, let God be the instructor, and enjoy ‘fellowship with Him in His plans’, instead of simply making our plans and asking God to help *us* ([1894]/1931:77); in other words, by placing the horse before the cart, we learn best by being led. Third, by leaving ‘the responsibility with *Him*, our strength would not be exhausted with worry and anxiety, but would be at His disposal, and accomplish His ends’ ([1894]/1931:77-78). Interestingly, after nearly four decades of mission experience, and around the time that Taylor penned his insights on the Song of Songs, he came to a deeper recognition that the work was God’s, not his (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:444-446).

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<sup>240</sup> Lam explores the significance of the ‘I am’ statements in relation to the beloved’s transformation from a depleted self to a generative self; in sum, ‘a journey from self-depletion to self-giving’ (2012:84-85).

The corollary drawn from this final section is ‘*be a loving sacrament*’, where a sacrament is defined as an “outward sign of an inward and spiritual grace” (Loades 2011:258).<sup>241</sup> The beloved’s own vineyard, or herself (Taylor [1894]/1931:80), is invested now with ‘resources of divine wisdom and might’; thus the purposes of grace are being carried out in partnership with and through her ([1894]/1931:77-78). She is well equipped now to nurture other vineyards because of the transformative work of love and grace, and in fellowship with her Lord. She therefore seeks guidance ‘on behalf of those who have not yet reached her favoured position’ ([1894]/1931:77). This is metaphorised by the ‘little sister’ whose breasts are still undeveloped, and refers to the young and inexperienced who need mature guardians (Sg 8:8).

On the final stages of the spiritual journey,<sup>242</sup> Teresa of Avila employs the analogy of the two sisters Martha and Mary<sup>243</sup> ‘working together’ to illustrate the effectual harmonisation between contemplation (spiritual delight) and action (service):

For in the active – and seemingly exterior – work the soul is working interiorly. And when the active works rise from this interior root, they become lovely and very fragrant flowers. For they proceed from this tree of God’s love and are done for Him alone, without any self-interest. The fragrance from these flowers spreads to the benefit of many. It is a fragrance that lasts, not passing quickly, but having great effect (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1980:257).

Being a sacrament of love therefore includes the harmonization of the inner life (interior root) and active service (fragrant flowers), which was evident in Teresa’s ‘spiritual embodiment and delight’, and her growing realisation that ‘union through action’ leads to ‘a fully embodied state’ (Tyler 2010:142). By extension, based on the beloved’s transformed vineyard as locus of transformation, the existential search ‘facilitates the incarnational process of *becoming* love’ and of bringing contentment to the Beloved (Lam 2012:78).<sup>244</sup> More specifically, a fully embodied spirituality is manifested as a holistic integration of body and soul, and *agape* and *eros*. Following Smith, ‘God shines out of everything, worldly and earthy, as God is encountered *in the flesh*’ ([1987]/2004:101). The ‘generative direction’ of the Song of Songs

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<sup>241</sup> Since ‘God can be hidden as well as made manifest’, a sacramental view enables us ‘to discern new “images” of grace’ (Loades 2011:258). In the Song of Songs, the manifestation of God is love (the flame of Yah).

<sup>242</sup> Both Tyler (2010:141) and McGinn (2020:35) refer to Teresa’s *Meditations on the Song of Songs* as an important ‘transitional’ work, demonstrating the development in her thinking, from a prior emphasis on union as rapture (notably in the *Life*), and later the union of contemplation and action, service to humanity (as in the *Interior Castle*). It is ‘especially noteworthy’ that ‘this decisive change in her mystical teaching’ is presented as ‘a legitimate reading of the infinite riches of the Song of Songs’ (McGinn 2020:35).

<sup>243</sup> The mystical way has a ‘remarkable ability to integrate life, to achieve unity within the complexity of opposite tendencies’ (Dupré 1996:13), including the combination of a contemplative life and active service.

<sup>244</sup> In *The Spiritual Canticle*, John of the Cross clarifies that at this stage the bride’s work ‘is to love’ (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:507), and the relevance of this mystical interpretation will be discussed in relation to Taylor’s missiological praxis (cf. 5.3.3).

is an important goal for the transformative journey, as it ‘stands in opposition to a world-denying orientation which robs both the person and the community of the fullness of life, the essence of love, and the goodness of creation’ (Lam 2012:78).

Being a loving sacrament is not devoid of suffering; on the contrary, Taylor cautions that ‘here [on earth] there are many thorns in every path, which call for watchful care’; hence, it is proper to ‘suffer with our Lord, in order that we may hereafter be glorified together’ ([1894]/1931:82).<sup>245</sup> Since suffering was characteristic of Taylor’s missionary spirituality, he attests that ‘[s]uffering and pain, bereavement and loss may test [love’s] constancy, but they will not quench it. Its source is not human or natural’ ([1894]/1931:76). The bride therefore embraces, even welcomes, suffering in her ‘happy service’ on earth, holding a long-term contemplative view that ‘the Bridegroom Himself’ will be her ‘exceeding great reward!’ ([1894]/1931:81). Convinced that ‘the rest will come, the burden and heat of the last day will have been borne’ ([1894]/1931:80-81), she finds soul rest in the face of suffering, loss, pain, death, etc., without being consumed by it. With an eye on eternity, the commentary closes with an eschatological hope of ultimate rest, drawing on images from Revelation (of residing in the ‘palace of the great KING’; eternally fed and led by ‘the LAMB’ who is ‘in the midst of the throne’; no more hunger, thirst, and tears, etc.). The beloved’s transformative journey therefore climaxes in the final invocation of the Spirit and the bride: ‘even so, come, LORD JESUS’ ([1894]/1931:80-82).

### 3.5 Conclusion

This first phase of the hermeneutical process, termed the *existential descriptive phase*, has explored a mystical-transformative lens to reading *Union and Communion*, based primarily on Taylor’s spiritual interpretation of the Song of Songs and his existential descriptions of union and communion. The mystical reading elucidated the beloved’s transformation as a journey ‘*from unrest to soul rest*’, and also generated important corollaries for the cultivation of soul love in contemporary spirituality. As per the summary of core findings and conclusions below, the feasibility of Taylor’s insights for a contemporary readership has been effectively demonstrated, hence the viability of *Union and Communion* as an abiding spiritual legacy.

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<sup>245</sup> McGinn’s comment that ‘[s]uffering and serving become more important in the final two chapters of Teresa’s *Meditations on the Song of Songs*’ (2020:32) also underscores Taylor’s emphasis. Teresa welcomes trials, suffering, crosses, and persecutions as a powerful remedy in the contemplative life, so that the enjoyment of spiritual delight does not neglect other souls (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1980:259).

First, a mystical lens is considered *innovative*. Presupposing *Union and Communion* to be an authentic '*expression of soul love*', Taylor's personal characteristics, writing skills, mental capacity, spiritual sensitivity, and soulful stature were highlighted, as they facilitated his experiential and conceptual integration of the Song over several decades, toward the eventual writing of *Union and Communion* in his mature years. The innovative approach has also considered the role of mystical poetics in interpreting a lyrical-poetic and mystico-erotic text like the Song of Songs, which led to the conclusion that soul language encompasses holistic, poetic, magnetic, and symbolic aspects (in contrast to dogmatic and reductionistic interpretations). Read in similar vein, Taylor's '*expression of soul love*' is not a systematic treatise of the Song of Songs; but rather a creative interpretation of divine-human intimacy.

Second, the mystical lens is *informative*. The Western Christian mystical tradition, including the Song of Songs' tradition, has served as a rich supplementary forum for identifying and comparing the mystical elements in *Union and Communion*. These are based primarily on Taylor's spiritual reading of the Song; experiential emphasis on the felt presence of God; affective expressions in relation to the Bridegroom of the soul; and union with Christ in both love and service. Since Origen's scriptural hermeneutic has seen a resurgence in contemporary spirituality methodologies, the use of a mystical lens has been further validated. From a contemporary perspective, Tyler's insights on 21st century soul discourse (2016) has provided a framework for identifying the key mystical elements in *Union and Communion* and engaging contemporary scholarship with regard to a mystical hermeneutic. The adaptation of his five essential components has thereby laid a foundation for the use of soul language in the current research, namely: 'a way of seeing'; 'a path of unknowing'; 'ambiguity and paradox'; the 'symbolic, creative and artistic'; and, finally, the 'relational and libidinal' component.

Third, the mystical lens is *interactive*. The simplicity and clarity of Taylor's text is densely packed with existential descriptions, biblical analogies, and missionary exhortations. As an in-depth reading has demonstrated, it is also pregnant with evocations for a dialogue with other mystical authors on the Song of Songs, partially because of the intrinsic nature of the poetic Song. In spite of the difference between Taylor's Protestant theology and Roman Catholic mystical theology and terminology, several resonances with Bernard of Clairvaux, Teresa of Avila, and John of the Cross highlighted meeting points in the Song of Songs. Moreover, by incorporating relevant terms and themes employed in the contemporary discipline of spirituality, the 19th century devotional tone of the text was modified into a dynamic interactive mode. It thereby highlighted the inherent capacity of Taylor's text to engage a broader conceptual, experiential, and religious spectrum, which leads to the

conclusion that his insights are not only feasible for contemporary spirituality, but valuable for an understanding of the mystical dimension of Protestant missionary spirituality.

Fourth, the mystical lens is *integrative*, as it held together the interweaving of Taylor's mystical spirituality and missionary spirituality. In several instances, he employs a missiological lens to his interpretation of the Song of Songs. For example, the Beloved's heart is ravished by the one who is prepared to engage in the mission of 'rescuing the perishing'; and, with reference to the invitation to 'Come with Me from Lebanon, my bride' (Sg 4:8), he connects this loving invitation and constant presence of the Bridegroom with the 'Go' and 'Lo I am with you always' of the Great Commission. The integration of love and service also included comparisons with Teresa of Avila's writings on the Song of Songs. Though written from a different tradition (16th century Spanish Carmelite), her analogy of Martha and Mary highlighted a transformation in mystical consciousness, as well as Teresa's own development in mystical teaching on the union of action and contemplation in the final stages of the journey.

Fifth, the mystical lens is *transformative*, having traced the beloved's journey *'from unrest to soul rest'* through an eight-fold mystical-transformative paradigm. In summary, the initial *'disposition'* of unrest and dissatisfaction is caused primarily by a lack of surrender and trust; occupation with selfish interests and egoistic motives; and resistance to relinquishing control of one's life, will, and possessions; thus, depriving the beloved of true satisfaction, inner rest, intimacy, and joy. That existential starting point is considered a preparation by grace for a new stage of spiritual maturation, as evident in the *'desire'* for a more consistent and felt sense of the Beloved's presence, and a deeper longing for the 'sacred intimacies of grace and love'. Since divine-human intimacy is both sweet and humbling, personal sin and mistakes are exposed by the divine light of love; in particular, the neglect of one's own vineyard (or of personal communion). *'Discernment'* is thus required to attend to this neglect, by confronting related temptations, compromises, and seductions. The journey is not linear or smooth, as experiences of *'desolation'* are often caused by self-willed indulgences and a relapse into worldly ways. The beloved's sense of the divine absence invokes an intense search in the first dark night, compelling the divine lover to pursue the beloved, wooing and calling out to her, and purifying her love for the discovery of new depths. Once communion is restored, she experiences the *delight* of mutual intimacy and satisfaction; realises her beauty in the divine image and her identity as the bride; and responds to the loving invitation of union with the Beloved in both love and service. Even after experiencing the heights and depths of intimacy, a more painful (almost despairing) experience in the second dark night is attributed to the beloved's spiritual pride and complacency. In tender words, the divine lover knocks on her

door in the *'darkness'*, implores her to open her heart and respond to the divine invitation. Once communion is restored, her *dignity* is affirmed with a new name (the Shulamite); her garden brings delight to the Beloved, and her fruitfulness brings refreshment to the weary. Finally, *detachment* suggests a continuum of unrestrained communion, soul rest, and satisfaction; of living in a conscious and generative way, 'ever active yet ever at rest', while leaning on her Beloved – and taking proper care of her transformed vineyard.

Sixth, the mystical lens is *evocative*. Taylor's emphasis on *being* and *abiding* (by grace), rather than *doing* (human effort and self-mastery) evokes practical suggestions on how to 'be' in intimacy with the divine Beloved. On the first mystical element of *disposition*, to *'be still'* is suggested as a means of disposing oneself optimally to God's hidden presence, providing space to feel one's inner restlessness, and attending to the resistances which prevent one from full surrender to God. Within the human ontological *desire* for the divine is the Beloved's own longing for union and communion with the human beloved; therefore, the second suggestion, is to spend time in solitude and *'be alone with God'*, which involves letting go of self-preoccupation, making space for listening and waiting on God, attuning to the divine longing within, and to be drawn and grasped by God. Soul love is also an invitation to remain connected to the source; thus, the third step, to *'be watchful over your own soul'* involves *discernment*, which alerts one to the dangers and distortions of ministry; in particular, the incongruity between one's *being* and *doing*, where work becomes all-consuming and egocentric, and severed from the source of life and love. The fourth corollary suggested in times of *desolation* is *'be careful of little seductions'*, which relates to specific caution on the 'little foxes' that spoil the vineyard, and 'little compromises' that incapacitate one's effectiveness in service. By clearing the space of inordinate attachments, the *delight* of mutual intimacy consecrates the beloved's secluded garden for holistic embodiment, and to *be all* and to *do all* for the Creator's pleasure; hence the fifth step to *'be holy/wholly for the Beloved'*. Spiritual pride and finding satisfaction in spiritual consolations cause a more serious relapse than the first, resulting in the *darkness* of complacency; this 'slothful self-indulgence' is an insidious and dangerous condition, which requires a more difficult restoration and deeper purification. The corollary to *'be humbled by mystery'* is therefore apt in the second dark night. Following this painful period, the bride's *dignity* (a lowly wild flower beautified by divine 'graces and virtues') is restored; thus, the natural consequence of her transformed vineyard (now a private garden) is to be *'be nurtured by beauty'* – by abiding in the Vine, the true source of fruitfulness; welcoming the culture of the Husbandman or Vinedresser; consciously seeking divine 'guidance and instruction'; and, in spite of pain and loss, producing her richest fruit through

adversity. Finally, the beloved's vineyard brings to visibility the transformative work of love and grace, and is invested with divine resources of wisdom and power; therefore, to 'be a loving sacrament' suggests that the divine purposes are being carried out with her and through her. In close communion with the Beloved, she does not neglect her own vineyard, but nurtures it while caring for other vineyards, particularly those who require encouragement and guidance on their journey.

In summation, this chapter has demonstrated that the mystical-transformative paradigm explored is *interpretive* for a mystical reading of *Union and Communion*; in particular, for tracing the beloved's journey *'from unrest to soul rest'*. The same paradigm will therefore be employed in the next chapter to explore and interpret Taylor's mystical encounter as transformative. Bearing in mind that Taylor's commentary on the Song of Songs generally refers to the beloved in the third person, this chapter has attempted to remain in sync with the 'objective' nature and nuances of the text. However, the next chapter will be enriched with autobiographical illustrations and personal experiences, as well as the impact of Taylor's personal transformation on the CIM and the wider Christian community.

## Chapter 4

### THE EXCHANGED LIFE AS MYSTICAL TRANSFORMATION

#### (The Contextual Analytical Phase)

#### 4.1 Introduction

Following the exploration of *Union and Communion* as a mystical text in Chapter 3, the purpose of this chapter is to explore the '*Exchanged Life*' as '*mystical transformation*'. The rationale is that the Exchanged Life<sup>246</sup> was a defining moment in Taylor's spiritual journey, which occurred around mid-life (at the age of 37, in Zhenjiang, dated September 04, 1869).<sup>247</sup> Since it formed the experiential precursor to Taylor's writing of *Union and Communion*, it is encapsulated here as '*experiential union with Christ*' and an '*experience of soul rest*'; moreover, Taylor's transformation effected a more integrative missionary spirituality in his second half of life.<sup>248</sup> This chapter, the second phase of the hermeneutical process, therefore provides a personal context for the mystical themes of union with Christ, abiding in Christ, soul rest, etc., which he developed in later writings. It demonstrates the inextricable connection between mystical transformation and mystical text by incorporating data of his personal narrative and the China missions context (confined roughly to the period 1868-1900).

With '*abiding*' as hermeneutical key in this chapter, the methodological approach will be based on the mystical-transformative paradigm tested in Chapter 3, which will be re-employed to explore Taylor's mystical transformation as a journey '*from holy striving to wholly abiding*'. The beloved's journey from '*unrest to soul rest*' in the previous chapter will resonate to some degree; and the more universal approach to the Song of Songs will be enriched by the journey of a specific historical referent within a 19th century China missionary context. Based on the findings of the paradigm, eight corollaries pertaining to *soul rest* (or wholly abiding) will be summarised in the conclusion of this chapter.

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<sup>246</sup> The '*Exchanged Life*' is termed as such by the original CIM biographers (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1958:112). Two chronological outlines record the significant event, dated '1869, September 4', as follows: 'Entered into The Exchanged Life: "God has made me a new man!" (Taylor & Taylor ([1932]/1958:168); and 'Hudson Taylor's personal Pentecost' (Broomhall 1929:237).

<sup>247</sup> Zhenjiang is located on the southern banks of the Yangtze River, with Nanjing to the west and Yangzhou to the north. It is roughly 218 kilometres from Shanghai and 227 kilometers from Hangzhou. The Exchanged Life narrative centres on the three cities of Zhenjiang, Yangzhou, and Hangzhou.

<sup>248</sup> Extensive extracts of Taylor's personal correspondence are in the key biographical works. First, in the original biography, 'The Darkest Hour 1868-1869' (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:155-168); 'The Exchanged Life 1869' ([1918]/2005:169-184); and 'Jesus Does Satisfy 1869-1870' ([1918]/2005:185-214). Second, in *Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret*, namely: 'Days of Darkness' ([1932]/1958:103-109); 'The Exchanged Life' (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1958:110-116), and 'No More Thirst' ([1932]/1958:117-129). Third, the abridged biography captures the account in two chapters: 'The Exchanged Life' 1868-1869' and 'Jesus Does Satisfy 1869-1871' (1965:204-226).

The significance of the Exchanged Life is that the inter-related themes of ‘*abiding in Christ*’ and ‘*soul rest*’ became characteristic of Taylor’s spirituality. For example, his brother-in-law, Benjamin Broomhall, commented that he ‘delighted to dwell’ on the subject of a ‘*sure and restful intimacy with the Lord*’, which he exemplified through ‘the joy and fruitfulness of abiding in Christ’; moreover, it was this ‘restful realisation of the Lord’s companionship!’ that sustained [Taylor] within the heart of all his labours (Broomhall 1905:13). This tribute, at Taylor’s Memorial Service in London (June 13, 1905),<sup>249</sup> accentuates the efficacy of soul rest and the ineffable presence of the Spirit in and through a mystic:

Get a man who is restfully intimate with his Lord, and you have a man whose force is tremendous! Such men move in apparent ease, but it is the ease that is linked with the infinite; it is the very rest of God. ... There is a certain compulsory impressiveness of character which attaches to profound spirituality, and which is commandingly present in those who walk in the fellowship of the Holy Ghost. I know not how to define it. It is a certain convincing aroma, self-witnessing, like the perfume of a flower. It is independent of mental equipment, and it makes no preference between a plenteous and a penurious estate. It works without the aid of speech, because it is the effluence of a silent and secret communion (1905:13-14, citing Jowett 1905).<sup>250</sup>

Given this impressive posthumous assessment, it is important to examine the missional context in which Taylor’s theme of abiding was birthed, as well as the transformative process which led to his emphasis on abiding and soul rest in the second half of life. The rationale is based on his own admission of failures, mistakes, sinfulness, weakness, ignorance, and misconceptions, which he openly shared with younger co-workers at field conferences.<sup>251</sup> Three points are worth noting from his personal testimony at the CIM conference in Shanxi, 1886.<sup>252</sup> First, on *abiding*, ‘for sixteen or seventeen years after my conversion [in June 1849], I had no idea of what abiding in CHRIST was’ (Beauchamp 1890:26). Second, on *soul rest*, recalling 1870 as one of the most trying years for the CIM, including the death of Maria, his first wife, ‘the Lord had taught me some months before what it was truly to rest in Him’ (1890:16-17). Third, on the *fullness of Christ*, ‘for nearly twenty years of my Christian life I was really in the dark as to the extent to which Scripture warrants us to reckon on CHRIST’S keeping power’, which

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<sup>249</sup> Taylor’s Memorial Service in London was held at the Conference Hall in Mildmay; the addresses and tributes were compiled in a booklet entitled *In Memoriam*, by Benjamin Broomhall’s son, Marshall (1905).

<sup>250</sup> This extract is located in *The Passion for Souls* (Jowett 1905).

<sup>251</sup> A case in point is his series of talks to CIM missionaries at Anqing in November 1885, which Broomhall states was later published as a series in *China’s Millions*; and upon request of friends, it was published in book form in 1894, entitled *A Retrospect* (2005b:454; cf. Taylor [1894a]/2010:4).

<sup>252</sup> *Days of Blessing in Inland China* (Beauchamp 1890) is a compilation of the proceedings of the CIM conference in Shanxi, 1886 (cf. Broomhall 2005b:461). Another significant text, entitled *Abiding in Christ* (Dorsey 2006:179-191), is based on Taylor’s conference talk in 1888 at Moody’s Northfield Conference.

resulted in his failure to draw by faith on ‘the fulness that there is in CHRIST for keeping power’ (1890:110-111).

By virtue of Taylor’s role as founder and director of the CIM, his personal spirituality and transformative experiences impacted on his co-workers and on the local Chinese among whom they ministered. Consequently, the theme of *abiding* became a keynote in the CIM’s collective spirituality, which Taylor delineated as a deepening stage of prayer in the life of the CIM nearly three decades after the Exchanged Life:

We were early led to trust the Lord to supply *pecuniary* needs in answer to prayer, and then to obtain in the same way *fellow-workers* and *open doors*; but we did not learn till later what it is to “abide in Christ,” and find *spiritual need* all met, and *keeping power* through faith in Him. More recently the infilling and refilling with the HOLY SPIRIT has taken a place among us as a Mission that it had not before; and we feel that we are still only beginning to apprehend what GOD can do through little bands of fully yielded, fully trusting, overflowingly filled believers (The Introduction, in Guinness [1892]/1977:xii).<sup>253</sup>

In light of the foregoing observations, the working question for the contextual analytical phase is identified as follows: *‘What were the key factors which precipitated Taylor’s defining moment of experiential union with Christ, and in what ways did his experience of soul rest effect a more integrative spirituality in his second half of life?’*

## **4.2 Criteria for interpreting the Exchanged Life as mystical transformation**

### *4.2.1 Mystical transformation*

Exploring the Exchanged Life through the lens of mystical transformation dispels hagiographical notions of holiness, including the notion of ‘a higher plane’ of spirituality. The original biographers assert, for example, that Taylor ‘proved it possible to live a consistent spiritual life on the highest plane’ (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1958:11); yet, they also record in considerable detail the ‘spiritual crisis’ and depths of darkness and near-despair that he faced in 1869 (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:171). These assessments appear contradictory, given Taylor’s recollections of this period of deep spiritual need, when ‘alone in Inland China’, he felt conflicted by the incongruence between his belief and praxis at the time (Taylor 1902:146,

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<sup>253</sup> Taylor’s *Retrospect* ([1894a]/2010), as well as the chapter ‘A Man Sent from God’ (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1955:82-88), delineates personal stories of God’s answers to prayer. On his emphasis on the Holy Spirit, several sources are recommended, namely: the role of the Holy Spirit in Taylor’s life and mission (Kan 2000); pneumatology in Taylor’s approach to the Bible (Wigram 2007:171-175); ‘The Pneumatological Influence on the Cambridge Seven’ (Goodwin 2010); and ‘Pentecostalism in the CIM’ (McConnell 2016).

cf. 4.4.4 below). As the chapter unfolds, it will become evident that the Spirit used various internal struggles and external circumstances to bring life-giving correctives and lasting perspectives to Taylor's spirituality. His misconceptions of striving for faith and holiness were thereby clarified; and an experiential knowledge of the indwelling and all-sufficiency of Christ released him from the weight of personal striving, toward a newfound restful abiding in Christ.

In light of the foregoing, *mystical transformation* is apt for an in-depth analysis of the Exchanged Life. Based on Kourie's assertion, 'mystical transformation of consciousness ... leads to *non-egocentricity*' (2012:38-40); here 'non ego' refers to a relinquishing of the 'ordinary mind' and 'ordinary thoughts', so that 'the landscape normally hidden in the depths of the psyche can surface' (2012:38-40). Since mysticism and modern depth psychology both have as their aim 'the unifying and integration of consciousness' (2012:30),<sup>254</sup> it follows that a transformative encounter (or defining moment) is embedded in the fabric of a life journey, along a continuum of ongoing transformation. The exploration of Taylor's journey '*from holy striving to wholly abiding*' will therefore be informed by both mystical and psycho-spiritual insights, including three main stages in transpersonal psychology, as delineated by Kourie (2012:41, citing Washburn 1995:5-8),<sup>255</sup> namely: *pre-egoic* (early childhood); *egoic* (late childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood); and *transegoic* (mid-life or later). These stages are fluid rather than fixed, and though broadly applied in this chapter, they provide a framework for understanding mystical transformation as a process that leads to 'transegoic integration' (2012:41). Taylor's *pre-egoic* stage begins in Barnsley, Yorkshire (born in 1832, under the influence of pietistic Methodist/Wesleyan parents who were evangelistic and missions minded). His *egoic* phase includes Barnsley (conversion, call to China, and consecration at the age of 17); Hull and London (medical studies); Shanghai (arrival in Shanghai in 1854), and his first return visit to England with his family (1860-1866). The *transegoic* phase, in which the Exchanged Life is located (1868 onwards), revolves around Zhenjiang, Yangzhou, Hangzhou, and Shanghai; and later when he emerged as an international missionary figure.

#### 4.2.2 *Mid-life transition and apex of Taylor's spiritual journey*

Since the Exchanged Life occurred at the age of 37, it is treated in this research as a pivotal mid-life transition and the apex of Taylor's spiritual journey. From a Jungian perspective, the

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<sup>254</sup> Welch comments that depth psychology is helpful as 'a response to contemporary loss of soul', especially in a 'rational, technical, too-conscious age, the symbols of religion lose their power to enhance the development of the self. A regression of energies takes place and the psyche becomes a source of disintegration rather than wholeness' (1982:78).

<sup>255</sup> Washburn, M 1995. *The Ego and the Dynamic Ground*. New York: State University of New York Press.

mid-life transition may be differentiated by ‘the morning of life’ and ‘the afternoon of life’, where the former ‘ends at around thirty-five to forty years of age’ (Gollnick 2005:163). Mid-life transformation lies at the heart of ‘*individuation*’ (the Jungian term to describe the overall process of psychological development), which is defined as ‘the process by which individual beings are formed and differentiated’ (2005:173). Thus, the primary work of the second half of life is becoming ‘more aware of, and coming to terms with the inner world’ (2005:163). Following Welch, though the transition ‘is often a time of great difficulty and tension’<sup>256</sup> with different demands, new rules, and painful emotions, it has a unifying potential:

... a broad maturity of personality comes to those whose mid-life transition has been a particularly difficult and challenging time. Their psyche has a unity and power which is the result of hard-earned development (1982:87).

The emphasis on mid-life transformation and transegoic integration has particular relevance for Taylor’s transformation, which has been encapsulated as “Not I, but Christ”, or simply, “No longer I” (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:165, 169); [1932]/1958:112). From a psycho-spiritual perspective, this Pauline terminology (cf. Gal 2:20), might well be interpreted as a shift ‘from *ego identity* to a broader and more universal *self-identity*’ (Gollnick 2005:175), which Jung refers to as ‘the self or the self-archetype’ (2005:175). If, as Jung asserts, ‘*Christ exemplifies the archetype of the self*’ (Welch 1982:192),<sup>257</sup> then ‘becoming our true self in Christ’ (Hernandez 2008:50-51) would involve a conscious conformity to Christ the archetypal *Self* (Rm 8:29). In other words, the ‘shift of the center of awareness from the self to a point beyond the self’, states Dupré, ‘both transforms the field of consciousness and unifies it in a unique manner’ (1996:9). From the perspective of mystical consciousness, ‘Not I, but Christ’ is therefore transformative, unitive, and integrative. It does not mean a loss of identity through absorption into Christ/God,<sup>258</sup> nor an abstraction of the person into a non-entity. In relation to John’s Gospel, its characteristic is the ‘availability of the divine life here on earth in Jesus Christ’ (Kanagaraj 1998:278); thus, Johannine mysticism places emphasis on ‘the transformation of the disciples’ lives into the divine life that flows from Jesus’ (1998:280). In so doing, this Gospel has ‘accommodated not the idea of “absorption into God”, but the

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<sup>256</sup> From a spiritual direction perspective, Welch’s chapter on ‘A Map for Life’s Journey’ (1982:85-110) provides helpful insights on psycho-spiritual transformation in the first and second half of life.

<sup>257</sup> In the chapter on ‘Christ, Symbol of the Self’ (1982:191-216), Welch cites two important statements by Jung: first, ‘Christ is the still living myth of our culture’; and, second, ‘The Christ-symbol is of the greatest importance for psychology in so far as it is perhaps the most highly developed and differentiated symbol of the self, apart from the figure of the Buddha’ (1982:192).

<sup>258</sup> The misunderstanding surrounding ‘mystical union (*unio mystica*)’ is one of the factors that accounts for Protestant opposition to mysticism (McGinn 2016a:4); thus, by clarifying von Hugel’s term ‘mystical element’ in Christianity, McGinn’s works have been helpful in the recovery of Protestant mysticism (cf. 4.2.4 below).

‘absorption of life *from* God through Jesus’ (1998:280). In the Exchanged Life, this emphasis of life flowing *from* God through Jesus the Vine proved to be a life-giving corrective to Taylor’s vain efforts to get the sap out of the Vine himself to procure faith and holiness (cf. 4.4.5 below).

#### 4.2.3 *The mystical symbolism of John’s Gospel (the Fourth Gospel)*

Biblical imagery, natural metaphors, and mystical symbolism are essential to the exploration of the Exchanged Life, since Taylor describes his experiences primarily through the metaphors of ‘*Christ the Whole Vine*’ (Jn 15) and ‘*Living Water*’ (Jn 4, 6 & 7). As previously stated, in addition to the Song of Songs (upon which *Union and Communion* is based), John’s Gospel is an endearing biblical text in the Western mystical tradition. This New Testament book, suggests Downey, ‘speaks most strikingly about the oneness with God which is the meaning of contemplation in the Fourth Gospel’ (1993:210).<sup>259</sup> Given that the Trinitarian framework of Jesus’ oneness with God is the underlying motif for Jesus’ oneness with his disciples, and his prayer for them to be one (Downey 1993:210),<sup>260</sup> it follows that the symbol of the True Vine speaks of friendship, love and intimacy (Lee 2002:102). In contrast to the common master-slave paradigm in many passages of the New Testament, it is the ‘Johannine Jesus’ (in Jn 15:15) that ‘prefers the language of friendship as the appropriate model between Jesus and disciples’ (2002:102); this includes the language of love, knowledge, and freedom in keeping Jesus’ commandments, not an ‘unquestioning subservience’ (2002:104-105). Moreover, since this Gospel offers ‘an icon of wholeness and intimacy’ by counteracting ‘Enlightenment polarities’ and ‘a rationalistic and objectivist view of the world’ (2002:109), the integration of psycho-spiritual insights and mystical symbolism in this chapter is underscored.

Cognisant of Jung’s argument that ‘we are all badly in need of the symbolic life. Only the symbolic life can express the need of the soul’ (Welch 1982:40), the mystical symbolism of the Fourth Gospel is relevant for the language of soul (and soul care). With regard to the religious and spiritual changes at mid-life, Gollnick clarifies that these are ‘inner processes which cannot be directly described in precise scientific terminology’ (2005:197). Similarly, in the context of the Fourth Gospel, Schneiders comments that the symbol ‘cannot be explained

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<sup>259</sup> It is outside the present scope to discuss in detail the mystical symbolism of the Fourth Gospel (and the implications of the indwelling Trinity), which Yungblut (1997), Kanagaraj (1998), Schneiders (1999), Lee (2002), Lam (2012), and Stander (2016) approach from various theological and mystical perspectives.

<sup>260</sup> Jesus’ oneness with his disciples is frequently expressed using the verb which means “to abide” or “to live on in” (Downey 1993:210); it occurs ‘some forty times, with a significant number of instances clustered around the Farewell Discourse’, and also means to “stay” or “remain” (Lee 2002:88-89). *Menein* is the subject of Stander’s doctoral thesis (2016), which offers valuable insights in terms of spirituality/mysticism.

because it is not simply an appeal to the intellect but a locus of experience' (1999:67-68).<sup>261</sup> As 'bearers of reality', symbols are imbued with luminosity and ineffability, and thus require a humility in interpreting reality, as Lee elaborates:

There is always a raggedness around the edges, an opening up to new meaning, a sense of reality expanding, an awareness of ineptitude. Symbols are efficacious and luminous yet also give rise to a kind of humility of the senses, taking us to the edges of a reality that is beyond the power of expression (2002:28).

#### 4.2.4 *Spiritual experience in Taylor's Protestant evangelical spirituality*

Experience is considered 'a late developer in Christian history', and was 'not one of the tenets of the Reformation' (Kourie & Ruthenberg 2009:179).<sup>262</sup> However, as McGinn's study (2016a) demonstrates, Protestant mysticism is 'not a false category' (2016a:300);<sup>263</sup> in fact, its 'rich variety' invites further study:

The rich variety among the Protestant religious thinkers who sought deeper and transforming contact with God is a good reason for affirming that Protestant mysticism is a necessary category, even as we are only beginning to realise how complex it really is (2016a:301).

Though 'mystical experience is not necessary to salvation or in itself a proof of sanctity' (Auden 1964:31), it is not to be negated, as 'the experience of being strongly aware of the presence of God' is borne out in innumerable passages in the Bible, in the examples of Moses, Samuel, Paul, etc. (Hay 2011:419). Given the legacy of 'a widespread uneasiness about the possible relationship of religious experience with illusion or mental instability', Hay presents data to counter-argue the negative assessment of religious experience (2011:421-436).<sup>264</sup>

With reference to early 19th century evangelicalism, the mystical element which influenced leaders like John Wesley had weakened; and consequently became 'more

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<sup>261</sup> Schneiders elaborates that John's Gospel 'is itself symbolic' (1999:36), therefore '[s]ymbolism is the primary hermeneutical key' to understanding this Gospel (1999:76). She hones in on its theology as incarnational (1999:77); the 'essentially mystical and immediate rather than ritual or institutional' interweaving of theological motifs (1999:56); the need to open up in prayer to 'a *transforming experience*', rather than merely read the Gospel 'for information about divine realities', which renders the symbol a present reality (1999:56, 68).

<sup>262</sup> For a Protestant perspective, Tamburello's discussion on a 'generic' or 'broader understanding of Christian mysticism' cites Von Hügel's work (1961), which 'is less interested in a unique experience of union with God than in the integration of mysticism with other dimensions of religious life' (1994:8). In this sense, Tamburello suggests that Calvin's mysticism is 'broader in scope' than Bernard of Clairvaux's (1994:3-12).

<sup>263</sup> Coffey's chapter 'Between Puritanism and Evangelicalism' (2016:29-49) shows the varieties in Puritan literature, namely the strenuous disciplines, yet a warmer aspect; the experimental (or experiential) qualities, the affective dimension, devotional poetry, bridal mysticism, etc.

<sup>264</sup> For a succinct discussion of mystical experience and contemporary debates, the chapter on '*Unio Mystica*: The State and Experience' (Dupré 1996:3-23) and 'What is Mystical Anyway?' (Tyler 2011:3-25) are helpful; both authors discuss the perspectives of William James (1842-1910), who uses the word '*mystical*' to describe 'psychic phenomena' and related 'practices of the occult' (2011:9-16).

systematically rational and ordered, with everything in its place' (Wigram 2007:245). As a 'child of the Methodist revival' (Broomhall 1929:10), Taylor's intense spiritual experiences were rooted in the Wesleyan tradition, the Calvinistic emphasis on 'union with Christ', and the Puritans' interpretation of the Song of Songs (Wigram 2007:116-141). He therefore harnessed the mystical aspects of his religious heritage; and though shaped to some extent by the English culture of Romanticism, he remained conservative theologically (2007:246). Since '[a]ctual spiritual experience was vital' for Taylor, his scriptural interpretations reflect an 'experiential hermeneutic' and a 'very immediate and highly personal approach' (2007:122, 135). Moreover, as will become evident, his 'psychological state on approaching the text was one of spiritual need', to the extent that his 'own spiritual experience deeply coloured his use of the Bible' (2007:135, 138). In defence of Taylor, the revelatory role of Scripture (especially the natural imagery and nourishing symbols of John's Gospel) provided a sense of immediacy<sup>265</sup> and a deep consciousness of God's presence, which became a mark of his spirituality.

Wigram regards Taylor as 'an evangelical mystic', along with Zinzendorf, based on their 'commitment to mission derived from their passionate love for Christ' (2007:43). Neither of them though are cited in Fremantle's (1964) compilation of essential extracts of Protestant mystics. Interestingly, Piper describes 'the influential trio of 19th century British friends (Charles Haddon Spurgeon, George Müller, and Hudson Taylor) as 'mystics in their own way',<sup>266</sup> meaning 'each had a profound, heartfelt, personal relationship with the living Christ' (2016:21). Emboldened by profound experiences and passionate love for Christ, Taylor attempted to revive the mystical roots of his Protestant heritage, as Wigram elaborates:

[He] 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. ... 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 (2007:245-247).<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Immediacy of experience is integral to a vital spirituality, especially where '[r]eligion no longer points to the presence of God in my experiences', and becomes 'a world in itself, drawing me out of my own world and away from a nourishing contact with God'; when this occurs, its symbols then 'dry up' (Welch 1982:79).

<sup>266</sup> Piper elucidates the differences, as follows: Spurgeon's focus was on church and powerful preaching through relentless adversity; Müller's was on orphan care and an unshakable satisfaction in God; and Taylor on world missions with an enjoyment of lasting union with Jesus Christ (2016:30-31).

<sup>267</sup> Taylor's experiences were 'mediated' by many internal and external factors, including the collective yearning of the CIM. By way of clarification on mediation, Barry affirms that 'in human experience God is directly encountered, but mediately, not immediately' (1989:28); yet 'any human experience, hence any medium, can disclose God' (1989:28). Given the multidimensionality of human experience, however, discernment is needed to discern good and evil (1989:29); also known as '*discernment of spirits*' in the Ignatian tradition.

Given the rich varieties of religious experience, yet cognisant that they can potentially cause both blessing and danger, ‘four common features’ delineated by Auden (1964:10-13) provide helpful parameters for validating personal experiences, including Taylor’s.<sup>268</sup> First, experience ‘is always “given,” that is to say, it cannot be induced by an effort or will’ (1964:10); second, it ‘seems to the subject not only more important than anything he experiences when in a “normal” state, but also a revelation of reality’ (1964:10); third, it ‘is totally different from that of “seeing things” whether in dreams or waking visions’ (1964:11),<sup>269</sup> and, fourth, ‘[t]hough the experience is always given and surprising, its nature is never entirely independent of the subject’ (1964:11).

#### 4.2.5 *The key spiritual traditions in Taylor’s conservative evangelical spirituality*<sup>270</sup>

Wigram (2007) delineates two broader cultural influences on Taylor’s 19th century evangelical spirituality, namely: the Enlightenment and Romanticism (2007:51-57); and, with regard to spiritual traditions and spiritual formation, these include mainly Methodism, the Holiness Movement, and the Open Brethren Movement (2007:57-70). Other authors specify Taylor’s denominational background as ‘Baptist’ (Kommers 2015:6), or ‘Brethren’ (Kommers 2020:4; Yu 2000); while Wiersbe states that his ‘convictions were Baptist’ (1976:64). Though theologically conservative, Taylor’s personal spirituality was experiential, experimental, and eclectic, with mystical elements. Moreover, in its outworking in mission, he was ‘a man far ahead of his time’ in terms of his ‘ecumenical outlook’ (Kane 1994:197-200). The appeal of his spirituality and message was his ‘authenticity’, observes Wigram, which ‘chimed with the heightened religious expectation of the time’ (2007:143).<sup>271</sup> Thus, the Exchanged Life is aptly

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<sup>268</sup> In his discussion on ego-inflation, spiritual pride, psycho-physical disturbances, manic-depressive psychosis, the Via Negativa, personality types, etc., Auden cites John of the Cross’ teaching on ‘humility’ and the ‘fruits of charity’ (1964:29-30-32).

<sup>269</sup> Citing Teresa of Avila’s mystical experiences of visions and locutions, she did not see with ‘bodily eyes or bodily ears’, Auden asserts that ‘they do not see anything in a physical sense’; and where they ‘sometimes “see and hear” things, they ‘always recognize these as accidental and irrelevant to the real experience, and to be regarded with suspicion’ (1964:11).

<sup>270</sup> Several works address the spiritual milieu of 19th century evangelicalism in England from a broad range of topics, which also impinge on the CIM. These include the following: the evangelical understanding of the doctrine of divine providence; premillennial eschatology; criticism of British imperialism by missionaries and their condemnation of the opium trade (Stanley 1990:67-70; 76; 109); the Enlightenment, Romanticism, the Holiness movement, Keswick, the faith principle in mission, etc. (Bebbington 1989; 2000; 2005); British Evangelicalism, the Evangelical Revival, The Missionary Movement, Anti-Catholicism, North American fundamentalism, etc. (Noll, Bebbington, Rawlyk 1994); the CIM as a ‘prism’ to evaluate the far-reaching influence of nineteenth-century British evangelicalism (Austin 1998; 2007); heart religion and evangelical piety (Coffey 2016); holiness and Brethren influences on Chinese churches (Yu 2000; Wu 2012; Woodbridge 2019).

<sup>271</sup> Wigram delineates the various theological influences that contributed to Taylor’s role as ‘a major pioneer in mission’ (2007:191), while Stanley (1990:165) notes the holiness movement’s emphasis on ‘personal consecration rather than social regeneration’; hence Taylor’s popularity and attraction among these groups.

located within the context of revival and holiness teaching, which forms the basis for Wigram's delineation of six characteristics of Taylor's spirituality, as follows: 'self-surrender to God'; 'perfect holiness'; 'entire consecration'; 'higher plane'; 'consolations of Christ'; and 'praise and glory to God' (2007:89-100).

As gleaned from Cho's research (2007), the foregoing six characteristics resonate with the spiritual terminology of two unmarried British women hymn writers, namely: Havergal (1836-1879), known as 'Keswick's poet', and Goreh (1853-1937),<sup>272</sup> who was inspired by Havergal. One of Taylor's favourite phrases, "They who trust Him wholly [f]ind Him wholly true", by Havergal, is frequently cited in the CIM literature (Taylor [1894a]/2010:81; Dorsey 2006:281-282); as well as Goreh's hymn, 'The Secret of His Presence', one of the CIM's favourite hymns (Beauchamp 1890:4; Taylor [1894]/1931:6, 46). By way of interest, and as a counter point to Victorian culture, Cho acknowledges Taylor's innovative strategy of accepting women as missionaries, including single women (2007:259, 270); moreover, she notes that Havergal met Jennie Taylor at Mildmay in 1874 (2007:259).<sup>273</sup>

#### 4.2.6 *The CIM's mutual collaboration with the Keswick Convention (KC)*

Taylor's spirituality from mid-life onwards might be summed up in the observation by his host in Australia (1890-1891), as follows: 'an embodiment of Keswick teaching'; of being 'in God all the time, and God in him'; the 'true abiding of John 15'; the 'lover-like attitude' in relation to Christ; the bountiful experience of the Song of Solomon'; the 'rapture of a child at the blaze of color and beauty'; an 'unfailing joy in God's creation'; etc. (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:478-481). By way of background, Taylor visited the KC for the first time in 1883; and, in 1887, contributed to its 'missionary breakthrough' that year (Kommers 2015:6). After his first public address at the KC in 1893 (2015:6), he graced its platform on several occasions in subsequent years.<sup>274</sup> Taylor's spiritual influence resulted in a mutual collaboration; and,

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Bundy (2003:227) considers Taylor one of the Holiness movement's 'primary activists', 'theorists', and mentors'; and 'the most important model of self-sacrificial "faith missions"' (2003:24, 51); while Naselli (2017) cites Taylor as one of Keswick's 'foremost missionaries' (2017).

<sup>272</sup> Ellen Lakshmi Goreh was 'a Mahratta Brahmin lady' who worked as a missionary among her own countrywomen in the Punjab (Beauchamp 1890:4). Her hymn 'In the Secret of His Presence' (1883) is printed in full in *Days of Blessing in Inland China* (Beauchamp (1890:4); and, as noted in the previous chapter (cf. 3.3.5), two extracts are cited in *Union and Communion* ([1894]/1931:6, 27).

<sup>273</sup> Though Havergal's hymns and poetry became influential in 19th century evangelicalism, she never visited the Keswick Convention, and was cautious to not associate explicitly with the holiness movement and the controversy of perfectionism (2007:273). She was known as 'Keswick's hymnist', and 'the consecration poet'; and also had a 'crisis experience', on December 2, 1873 (Naselli 2017).

<sup>274</sup> At Keswick in 1896, Taylor mentions that the 'first conference' he ever attended was 'at Barnet, under the presidency of the late Rev. William Pennefather' (1816-1873), which left a lasting impression on him with regard to waiting upon God (Dorsey 2006:283). Pennefather, born and schooled in Dublin, became an influential Irish Anglican clergyman in Barnet from 1852; he introduced conferences on interdenominational

according to his estimate, Keswick produced about two-thirds of the CIM's missionaries (Naselli 2017). The annual convention attracted thousands to England's Lake District, and gradually became 'the catalyst for a fresh era in missionary work' in England (Kommers 2015:1). Many missionaries from around the world point to Keswick as 'the birthplace of their mission calling' (2015:6).<sup>275</sup>

From a contemporary perspective, Piper (2016), among others, raises cautions on Keswick teaching; in particular, the following two-fold imbalance: the overemphasis on passivity in the pursuit of holiness, and a distinct crisis experience of consecration as the means of entering the 'higher life' (2016:99). Nevertheless, he affirms the efficacy of Taylor's 1869 experience as 'a powerful revelation of the inexpressible reality of union with Christ' (2016:98); a 'higher-life experience' that was characterised by painful pruning; consequently lifting him to 'a plane of joy and peace and strength that lasted all his life' (2016:99). Though Taylor read materials by holiness authors, it will become evident that the Exchanged Life was no simplistic 'quick fix',<sup>276</sup> nor was it synonymous with the 'crisis experience' promulgated by holiness proponents.<sup>277</sup> Wiersbe recommends reading the full account of the Exchanged Life despite theological reservations because it was for Taylor 'as simple and as real as salvation itself' (1976:65). As this research suggests, by reading it as a prelude to *Union and Communion*, the inextricable relationship between John's Gospel and the Song of Songs in Taylor's life and writings is retained. Moreover, when read together, these two biblical books provide essential biblical validation for Taylor's mystical spirituality.<sup>278</sup>

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missionary work in 1856; and, after his transfer to Mildmay in 1864, the annual Mildmay conferences became instrumental in local and foreign missions, including attendance by the CIM.

<sup>275</sup> Inspired by Taylor's sharing at Keswick in 1883, Sloane committed his life for service in China; he later became the UK's Assistant Home Director for the CIM (Broomhall 1905:56). Moreover, Holden (who wrote the Foreword in the 1931 edition of *Union and Communion*) was a council member of the Keswick Convention and was also involved in giving birth to Keswick in South America in 1911 (Kommers 2015:5).

<sup>276</sup> Naselli (2017) critiques 'higher life theology' (akin to Keswick theology) as a 'quick fix', and a 'shortcut to instant victory'; a theology that was influenced primarily by Wesleyan perfectionism and the holiness movement, which began in the late 1830s (2017). He sums up the two basic premises of the Higher Life/Keswick theology as 'let go' ('entire surrender' or 'entire abandonment') and 'let God' ('absolute faith'); adding that whatever descriptions were used to describe the new life ('The Second Blessing', The Higher Life, etc.), the proponents of the movement expressed it essentially as 'Not I, but Christ' (2017).

<sup>277</sup> In April 1875, prior to the first Keswick Convention (June 28 - July 2), Robert Pearsall Smith was introduced to Taylor (Broomhall 2005b:253). Robert and his wife Hannah (author of *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*), were influential in the early stages of the Holiness movement, promulgating 'crisis experiences' (Naselli 2017). The higher life movement (1858-1875) was dissolved in 1875 when Robert was removed from public ministry; however, the Keswick Convention 'institutionalized the message of the Smiths' (2017).

<sup>278</sup> Piper's chapter on Taylor's union with Christ (2016:84-103) does not develop the mystical thread; nor does it do justice to the significance of the Song of Songs in Taylor's teaching on union with Christ; his only mention of *Union and Communion* is by way of a footnote regarding a possible hint of Calvinist theology (2016:30).

### 4.3 A mystical-transformative paradigm: ‘from holy striving to wholly abiding’

This section will explore Taylor’s transformation ‘*from holy striving to wholly abiding*’ on the basis of the 8-D mystical-transformative paradigm previously tested. With slight variations tailored to Taylor’s personal/historical context, it will comprise the following eight mystical elements: *disposition of unrest; desire for holiness; discernment of sin and neglect; desolation through weakness; delight of soul rest; darkness through loss and suffering; dignity of wholly abiding; and detachment through letting go.*

Taylor’s personal narrative will be framed chronologically within the paradigm, and will focus mainly on his *transegoic* phase. This is not a strictly linear progression, as the mystical elements intermingle and overlap in real life. However, for the sake of understanding Taylor’s transformation within an historical China missions context, the eight mystical elements will be embroidered with synchronous events from approximately three decades (1868 to 1900). By way of background, only two decades prior to the founding of the CIM in 1865, the tense British Chinese relations were marked by ‘unequal treaties’, which allowed foreign traders to operate from five treaty ports, and opened the country to missionary work. The Treaty of Nanking (in August 1842), which Qing China was forced to sign with the United Kingdom, ended the first Opium War (1839-1842). Political tensions between China and the West thus remained in the foreground of 19th and early 20th century Protestant missions in China;<sup>279</sup> and it is within this complex political mosaic that Taylor’s mystical transformation is located.

#### 4.3.1 *Disposition of unrest*

In *Union and Communion*, Taylor addresses the habitual state of unrest and dissatisfaction that is common to many people, as well as their lack of knowledge of how to attain rest of soul and abide in Christ. Those general remarks are underpinned by his own experience of inner and outer unrest in the period August 1868 to early September 1869, where he is likened to a ‘cork on a choppy sea’ (Broomhall 2005b:106). By way of context, in August 1868, anti-foreign feeling ran high; hundreds of Roman Catholic converts were killed in Kweichow, and ‘French warships appeared off Nanking’; this was aggravated in 1869 by the building of a cathedral in Tientsin on the site of a temple (Lyll ([1965]/1976:41). The CIM was new to Yangzhou, an inland city without foreigners; however, the anti-foreign mob during the Yangzhou Riot<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> It is beyond the present scope to provide details. Lyll ([1965]/1976:23-103) offers a succinct overview of the CIM in this historical period, compared to the dense Volume Two of Broomhall’s magnum opus (2005b).

<sup>280</sup> Descriptions of the British-Chinese tensions during the period 1868-1870 and extracts of Taylor’s correspondence during the Yangzhou Riot and its aftermath are delineated by Broomhall (2005b:71-112);

vandalised the CIM's house and set it alight. After tense negotiations with the local authorities, Taylor arrived back safely, much to the other missionaries' relief; important documents and money were miraculously retrieved; Maria Taylor and Emily Blatchley survived a 12-15-foot jump from the upper level to the ground; all the members and children made a narrow escape; and the CIM had little option but to relocate by boat across to Zhenjiang.

To clarify Taylor's standpoint, he chose not to resort to consular protection; nor did he agree to violence through gunboat diplomacy. It was therefore ironic, notes Pollock, that for one who attempted in every way to earn the Chinese people's respect through Christian love, 'should become almost a *causus belli* between China and England, and be accused of wanting to evangelise China by gunboat' ([1962]/1996:184-185). The Chinese Government circularised all foreign powers against missionary work, according to Lyall ([1965]/1976:41); and the reaction from some members of both Houses of Parliament in England 'pressed for the recall of all British missionaries from China' ([1965]/1976:41). The debate was reported in *The Times* on December 1, 1868, which extended further to the House of Lords on March 9, 1869 (Broomhall 2005b:82-96). Taylor, though unknown to the British media, was 'catapulted into notoriety as the fire-eating fanatic who outraged innocent Chinese by violent denunciation of ancestor-worship, and then loudly demanded redress and gunboats' ([1962]/1996:189-190); while the CIM was tossed around as 'a shuttlecock' among opponents and supporters in England, as well as in the foreign community in Shanghai ([1962]/1996:189-192). Taylor, moreover, faced an onslaught of 'merciless slander' in local English newspapers in China, describing him as a 'restless apostle ... as difficult to lay hold of as a flea in a blanket' (2005b:102). A derogatory suggestion was published in the *Shanghai Recorder* that Taylor and the CIM be admitted to an 'excellent asylum' in Great Britain called 'the Hospital for Incurable Idiots' (2005b:102).<sup>281</sup> Thus, in 'the thick of the conflict', his letter to his parents (dated March 13, 1869) captures the intensity of his inner unrest:

..... envied, hated, despised, and unjustly blamed by others, working without precedent in many respects and with few experienced helpers, often sick in body as well as perplexed in mind and embarrassed by circumstances, had not the Lord been specially gracious to me, had not my mind been sustained by the conviction that the work is His and that He is with me ... I must have fainted and broken down (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:167).

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Taylor & Taylor ([1918]/2005:137-214); Pollock ([1962]/1996:173-192); Lyall ([1965]/1976:40-41); Griffiths (2004:68-71); among others.

<sup>281</sup> In 1886, Taylor testifies to God's providence in the vision to evangelise inland despite having no treaties and no legal permission; in ministering in this unprecedented way, he refers to these articles in the newspapers which stated that the CIM would have been safer in 'the Asylum for Incurable Idiots' (Beauchamp 1890:85).

Second, personal disputes in the fledgling CIM, as well as dissatisfaction by and opposition from members who refused to adapt to Chinese culture in the CIM's prescribed way, caused endless trouble and heartache within the fledgling CIM;<sup>282</sup> this led to their eventual dismissal after two years of painful and patient deliberations by the Taylors (Pollock ([1962]/1996:160-169). In spite of discourtesy, untrustworthiness, and the harmful effect on others, the Taylors demonstrated 'meekness and patience ... given from above' ([1962]/1996:163). Among other rumours that had spread to England via the disgruntled members, Taylor was described as 'a dictator of the worst kind'; and was also falsely accused of 'kissing the unmarried ladies' ([1962]/1996:165). It was a false assumption, as Jennie Faulding and Emily Blatchley had been living with the Taylors, caring for the children, and assisting with household and mission responsibilities; thus, the affectionate Taylor would kiss them on the forehead. From an insider's perspective, Jennie's observations to her parents during the mission's internal crisis in 1867 highlights the enormous emotional weight that he carried; yet sustained by prayer and grace:

No one knows how much he has felt these troubles nor how much he has suffered from depression. If he were not in the habit of casting his burdens upon the Lord, I quite believe that what he has passed through he would have sunk under. Grace, not natural temperament, supported him ([1962]/1996: 167).<sup>283</sup>

Third, on a family and personal level, the Taylors were left grief stricken the year before at the death of their first-born child, Gracie, at the age of eight (August 23, 1867), while they were taking a break from the heat of Hangzhou ([1962]/1996:171). Moreover, Maria's ill-health was a concern; already at the age of 30, she was 'worn with privation' and had been 'tubercular since 1865' ([1962]/1996:170).<sup>284</sup> Missions in the 19th century was certainly not for the fainthearted; nor for 'self-seeking, ease-loving men and women' (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:158). Taylor insisted that the prerequisite for work in the interior of China was

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<sup>282</sup> The *Lammermuir Party* sailed for China on May 26, 1866 (Pollock [1962]/1996:144); already on board ship, communal adaptation and cultural adjustment began to unsettle some members with regard to clothing, living standards, and comparisons with other missions, etc., to the dismay of the Taylors and other members.

<sup>283</sup> In addition to this reference to 'depression', Tucker refers to Taylor's 'dark depression' in 1869 (cf. 4.4.4), while the official biographers referred to a 'depression of spirit' in 1871 (cf. 4.4.6). To avoid the 'reductionistic' approach of labelling (May [1982]/1992:178) and maintain an 'appreciation of mystery', discernment rather than diagnosis is preferred ([1982]/1992:151-153). In Taylor's case, discerning where the grace of God's transforming presence is operative, and of divine power working in and through human weakness.

<sup>284</sup> In June 1869, the Taylor family had spent a two-week holiday on the island of Putuo, the first in a year (Broomhall 2005b:101), which provided some reprieve in the heat of the battle. However, toward the end of August, Taylor was recovering from what he thought was pneumonia, and Maria from an attack of enteritis (2005b:110).

‘sacrifice’, not ‘luxury and freedom from care’ ([1918]/2005:157).<sup>285</sup> Thus, he personally strove to transcend his limitations, in spite of frailty as a child, being of small build, and beset with ill health through most of his life, especially dysentery which was frequently fatal (Doyle 2015b:114). Hudson and Maria were passionate lovers, which made long separations difficult for him emotionally (Pollock [1962]/1996:170). Nevertheless, in spite of inconveniences, his pioneering spirit urged him forward with fresh attempts for the evangelisation of unreached areas. As director of a pioneering mission, and exacerbated by the challenges of anti-foreign uprisings in a relatively poor 19th century Qing China, Taylor needed to deal with many ‘life-and-death situations’, and felt his physical presence was necessary (Doyle 2015b:119). However, willing ‘to a fault’, he travelled to help others, attend to their medical emergencies, and make their lives comfortable with limited financial resources (Broomhall 2005b:106).

#### 4.3.2 *Desire for holiness*

Under the strain of external pressures and inner unrest, not to mention the considerable drop in financial support as a result of the bad press and false accusations, it is understandable that Taylor’s spiritual life had been at an ebb; consequently, his emotions vacillated between hope and near despair, which eventually led to a spiritual crisis (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:164-166). At this juncture though, his desire was not for rest – neither physical nor spiritual – but specifically for ‘more holiness, life, power in our souls’ for himself personally and for the mission collectively (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:169-179).<sup>286</sup> Bearing in mind the influence of the Methodist/Wesleyan tradition on his childhood in Barnsley,<sup>287</sup> the roots of his desire for holiness were embedded in his *pre-egoic* phase. Also worth noting is that the indications of holy striving were present prior to his conversion in June 1849:

Often I had tried to make myself a Christian; and failing of course in such efforts, I began at last to think that for some reason or other I could not be saved, and that the best I could do was to take my fill of this world, as there was no hope for me beyond the grave (Taylor [1894a]/2010:5).

Through reading a sentence on “the finished work of Christ” in a Christian tract, entitled ‘Poor Little Richard’, the in-breaking of God into his youthful struggle was timely, effecting a

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<sup>285</sup> The raw CIM recruits enjoyed some luxury and comfort, thanks to the kindness of the Captain and crew. As Pollock describes, they were ‘feeding like fighting cocks on food most of them never could have afforded’ ([1962]/1996:145).

<sup>286</sup> The more general terms of a search for ‘spirituality’ or ‘spiritual wholeness’, which Tucker employs (1983:183; 2011:428), do not situate the desire for holiness within the spiritual climate of the CIM.

<sup>287</sup> Taylor acknowledges the ‘unspeakable debt of gratitude’ to his parents, their godly examples of life and instilling in him the need for mission, the value of prayer, the wisdom of the Bible, etc. (Taylor [1894a]/2010:5).

consciousness of God's presence and a heartfelt surrender to Christ (Taylor [1894a]/2010:7-9; Beauchamp 1890:139). Despite a dramatic conversion,<sup>288</sup> which was deep and real, a season of 'painful deadness of soul, with much conflict' followed (Taylor [1894a]/2010:9); it is described elsewhere as a 'coldness of heart', forgetfulness, indifference, scepticism, and spiritual lethargy (Taylor & Taylor [1911]/2005:82-83). However, by reading 'The Beauty of Holiness' (in the November edition of the *Wesleyan Magazine*), his longing for holiness was ignited, while simultaneously intensifying his sense of sinfulness ([1911]/2005:85-87). As evident in a letter to his sister Amelia, the desire for 'perfect holiness' and 'entire sanctification' (akin to holiness teaching) finds prominence again in his *egoic* phase:<sup>289</sup>

I so often give way to temptation. I am apt to be frothy and giddy, and I sometimes yield to my teasing disposition. Pray for me ... I am seeking entire sanctification. Oh that the Lord would take away my heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh! ... My heart longs for this perfect holiness ([1911]/2005:85-86).

Through a second in-breaking of God, 'when [he] had given up all hope and even desire for salvation', he pleaded that God would give him 'some work to do for Him, as an outlet of love and gratitude'; this momentous experience resulted in full surrender to God with 'unreserved consecration' (Taylor [1894a]/2010:9). Henceforth, his life was oriented toward China. The biographers note that his 'chief advantage, next to his godly parentage', was having to support himself from the age of 16, which shaped him into a hardworking, efficient, skilful, and versatile man (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1958:11). The striking characteristics therefore in Taylor's young adulthood are his heartfelt desire to please God, and his willingness to work *for* God. Over time, his mystical transformation would bring him to the vital realisation that it is God's own work, in us, through us, and through others (Beauchamp 1890:105).

With respect to Taylor's *egoic stage* (as a 24-year old missionary in Shanghai, 1856), ministering alongside the older Scottish evangelist William Burns, whom he describes as 'a spiritual father', provided an unprecedented taste of 'such holy, happy fellowship' ([1894a]/2010:57).<sup>290</sup> Such fellowship also reveals the extent of Taylor's 'great unrest of soul',

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<sup>288</sup> Taylor & Taylor ([1918]/2005:167) record the extraordinary synchronicity of events in Taylor's conversion experience: one leisurely afternoon in his father's library in Barnsley, while Taylor was wrestling with God and reading the Christian tract, his mother was praying for him miles away; and his younger sister Amelia was also holding out in hope for his salvation.

<sup>289</sup> Spiritual experience is closely related to the roots of spiritual desire, spiritual formation, and particular spiritual traditions. As Dupré (1996:3-8) explicates: 'all experience becomes interpreted experience, while all interpretation is mediated by experience. This implies that the religious tradition within which the mystical experience takes place is itself informed and shaped by experience' (1996:4).

<sup>290</sup> The ministry with Burns was prior to Taylor's marriage to Maria in January 1858, which he came to value as 'a precious gift' and blessing to himself as well as to many others (Taylor [1894a]/2010:87).

leaving him almost broken-hearted, when God led them to work in different spheres of ministry; hence a separation ([1894a]/2010:57). Struggling to rest in the knowledge that God's 'perfect wisdom, perfect love' was 'working for the best!', the song "The Missionary Call", which he heard for the first time at a missionary couple's home in Shanghai, moved him to surrender his will and pray for holiness and resolve ([1894a]/2010:57):

And I will go!  
I may no longer doubt to give up friends, and idol hopes,  
And every tie that binds my heart. ...  
Henceforth, then, it matters not, if storm or sunshine  
be my earthly lot, bitter or sweet my cup;  
I only pray, GOD, make me holy,  
And my spirit nerve for the stern hour of strife ([1894a]/2010:57-58).

In the *transegoic* phase (The Exchanged Life, September 1869), Taylor was not alone in his search for holiness, which had been brewing for several months. Ministering with McCarthy in Shanghai in August and sharing as spiritual companions on a journey of their unrest of soul, both men were dissatisfied with their spiritual lives, but were unable to help each other (Broomhall 2005b:110). Back in Hangzhou, McCarthy wrote to Taylor (in Zhenjiang) of his own 'consciousness of failure', and 'an unrest, a perpetual striving to find some way ... to continuously enjoy communion and fellowship with the Lord' (2005b:110).

A human reference point for the CIM's collective desire for holiness was Maria's own embodiment of a holy life, which also served as a precursor to the experience into which the Spirit was leading her husband (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:187). Maria is described as 'loving, unselfish, thoughtful of others', a disposition free of care and worry, a bright countenance 'that comes from the Holy Spirit's anointing' ([1918]/2005:187); while her disposition of soul rest is underscored by extracts from *How to Live on Christ* (Stowe, in Dean [1847]/1851).<sup>291</sup> Most notably, poetic descriptions of 'childlike surrender ... of the whole being to Him;' a 'constant looking to Him for grace'; a disposition of calm 'as the infant borne in the arms of its mother'; and a 'hope and trust' that 'rest solely on what He is willing and able to do for them' (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:187). This experience of soul rest, or abiding, accentuates that which grace freely bestows, in stark contrast to vain efforts of human striving:

Not by incessant effort for sunshine and air, not by vain struggles for those vivifying influences which give beauty to the blossom and verdure to the leaf; it simply

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<sup>291</sup> Taylor distributed the booklet 'How to live on Christ' among the CIM workers; these insights by Beecher Stowe, according to Augsburg (2008), first appeared in the introduction to *Religion As It Should Be* (Dean 1847). Viewed at: <https://www.path2prayer.com/famous-christians-their-lives-and-writings-including-free-books/j-hudson-taylor-pioneer-missionary-to-china/harriet-beecher-stowe-how-to-live-on-christ>

abides in the vine in silent and undisturbed union, and blossoms and fruit appear as of spontaneous growth ([1918]/2005:187, citing Stowe).

The desire for holiness was evidently a collective yearning of the CIM, as a result of reading holiness articles published in *The Revival* magazine, by Pearsall Smith, which had been circulating in the UK in 1868 (Broomhall 2005b:109). In light of holiness teaching (as elucidated in 4.2.5 and 4.2.6 above), their yearning for a ‘much higher (plane) of life and service than [they] had before thought possible’, is encapsulated as ‘holiness’ or ‘the victorious life’ (2005b:109).<sup>292</sup> Broomhall therefore sums up ‘the thinking of the CIM’ in 1869 as ‘the exchanged life’ and ‘union with Christ’; or just ‘union’, which was manifested by several members as ‘rest of soul’ (2005b:109-110). Devotional readings in *Christ is All* (Law 1867) and *How to Live on Christ* (Stowe, in Dean [1847]/1851) were influential in the collective spirituality of the CIM; and, in addition to McCarthy, the truths of abiding and soul rest had also dawned on Jennie Faulding and Emily Blatchley (Broomhall 2005b:110-111). Within this communal context of holiness, Taylor’s spiritual desire found resonance and validation.

It is worth examining, however, the collective yearning considering Broomhall’s comment that they had been ‘groping after an experience’, which the calm and Christ-like Maria Taylor had long been enjoying (2005b:109). Though it is not possible to assess the actual situation and motives, the other missionaries, many in their late twenties or early thirties, were evidently in need of spiritual renewal as a result of the weighty disputes in the mission, the merciless rumours of Taylor and the CIM, and the trauma of the Yangzhou riot. The Spirit renewed them with spiritual empowerment, boundless joy in troubles, and courage for the heavy load of work ahead; this was timely,<sup>293</sup> as missions funds were low; hostility from the local Chinese was intensifying; ‘inflammatory placards’ were being posted against ‘foreign devils’; and the Anqing riot was only days away (2005b:111). Taking into consideration Teresa of Avila’s distinction between consolations (*contentos*) and spiritual delight (*gustos*), where the former ‘arise in human nature and are directed toward God’ (May 2004:119-124), it is possible that they personally and collectively received consolations (*contentos*) in their desire for holiness. By way of contrast, Taylor’s encounter was not ‘a groping after an experience’,

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<sup>292</sup> The main tenets were explicated in the series “The Way of Holiness”, which include habitual victory over sin; strong when everything is committed unreservedly to Christ in perfect self-abandonment; strength perfected in weakness; claiming by faith and trusting Jesus for “a pure heart, and now!”; redemption and purification equally now, and with the same simple faith; etc. (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:165-166).

<sup>293</sup> Broomhall notes that the CIM was cautioned by Mr Berger at the London office on ‘the need for active resistance to evil and of effort to obey God’ in counteracting the over-emphasis on the passive, receptive aspect of ‘holiness’ (2005b:111). Bishop Ryle’s books, a few years later, attempted to balance the teaching of the Keswick Movement.

as it was a definitive, life-changing, and lasting transformation. As the following sections will illustrate, it may be aptly described as the *gustos* of contemplation, or the spiritual delights of sheer grace; these ‘arise in God, but human nature feels and enjoys them’ (2004:119).

#### 4.3.3 *Discernment of sin and neglect*

The neglect of soul care, or ‘the care of the soul’ requires discernment, as the previous chapter elucidated (cf. 3.3.3). In the early days of the CIM,<sup>294</sup> George Müller of Bristol, an exemplary man of faith who is credited for influencing Taylor’s financial principles,<sup>295</sup> sent his first cheque to the CIM, along with the following exhortation on the care of soul:

Now in your case, with all the many millions of idolaters around you, the temptation is, to be overpowered by the immense quantity of work to be done, to the not minding sufficiently your own souls. But this would only lead to loss. No amount of work can make up for the neglect of meditation ... and of prayer (Müller 1869).<sup>296</sup>

By way of background, Taylor maintained a habit of disciplined prayer and bible reading, which was essential to maintaining fellowship with God. In fact, he once shared with a friend that ‘the sun has never risen upon China without finding me at prayer’ (Pollock [1962]/1996:167-168). His daily routine included rising very early in the morning before daylight for a quiet time of uninterrupted prayer; and, if necessary, would continue his sleep after prayer ([1962]/1996:167). On long journeys, he spent lengthy times in prayer; sometimes lying down to pray, as kneeling was too exhausting; moreover, his Bible ‘in four small volumes’ would be packed into his travel kit (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:403). The Word of God, written and Incarnate, was a living reality to him, and is underscored by the fact that at the age of 71, he had read the Bible through ‘from beginning to end for the fortieth time in forty years’ ([1918]/2005:575).

Müller, referring to communion with God as ‘the chief business’ of his life, stated that the great temptation for preachers is to read the Bible with reference to others ‘to the neglect

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<sup>294</sup> Wigram (2007:51-78) delineates key individuals who influenced Taylor’s theological persuasions and faith practices, later implemented into the CIM policies and praxis; namely: George Müller, Andrew Jukes, Karl Gützlaff, and William Burns – the first two in the UK, and the latter two inspired his ministry in China.

<sup>295</sup> Müller’s faith principles are rooted in his Brethren background (he was one of the founders of the Plymouth Brethren, later known as the Open Brethren). His financial support to the CIM increased considerably after the negative press releases in the UK, which were instigated by British-China tensions over the Yangzhou riot (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1958:105-107).

<sup>296</sup> Müller’s original letter, dated October 1869, is located at the CIM archives, SOAS (Box #8, CIM/JHT, 169-174, letters 1869-1870). Additional insights on his prayer may be viewed online at:

<https://www.path2prayer.com/famous-christians-their-lives-and-writings-including-free-books/j-hudson-taylor-pioneer-missionary-to-china/george-müller-letter-to-hudson-taylor>

of their own souls’; consequently, they ‘lose the blessing, which God meant to convey thereby to [their] hearts’. To what extent does this apply to Taylor’s condition of soul in 1869?

It was just – himself – the unsatisfied longing of his heart, the inward struggle to abide in Christ, the frequent failure and disappointment. ... Fellowship with God was to him a great reality, a great necessity. He had known much of it; much, too, of the terrible void of losing it (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:164-165).

In discerning his own sinfulness, he confessed to ‘irritability of temper’ as ‘his besetting sin’, which seems to have been a ‘daily hourly failure’; and thus found it ‘hard to suffer fools gladly’ (Broomhall 2005b:109). At times, his own high standards and perfectionism caused him to be scrupulous, hard on himself, introspective, etc. (possibly related to his religious, cultural, and social background, which included strict discipline in childhood,<sup>297</sup> coupled with the Wesleyan/Holiness teaching on ‘perfect holiness’ and ‘entire sanctification’). However, despite his struggles, he was perceived by co-workers to be gentle, kind-hearted, and of tender spirit under trials, and admired for his self-abnegation, humility, self-denial, neverflagging earnestness, forbearing, and loving spirit (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:164; Pollock [1962]/1996:167). By not blaming the cause on the demands of work, shortness of funds, anxiety about people close to him, etc., he discerned his own lack of faith, guilt, sin of unbelief; and even more seriously, a ‘frequent state of soul ... which almost ended in despair’ (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1958:114). However, through honesty and humility, he recognised his need for the loving support of those nearest and dearest, as expressed in a letter to his parents:

Often I am tempted to think that one so full of sin cannot be a child of God at all; but I try to throw it back and rejoice all the more in the preciousness of Jesus and in the riches of that grace that has made us “accepted in the Beloved.” Beloved He is of God; beloved He ought to be of us. But oh, how short I fall here again! ... Do pray for me. Pray that the Lord will keep me from sin, will sanctify me wholly, will use me more largely in His service (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:167).

Taylor’s willingness to admit and confront his own sins, and plead for prayer from confidants, is exemplary, as it demonstrates his vulnerability as a mission leader, as well as an ability to empathise with others in their struggle:

So bitter was this experience that even when it was left far behind he could never forget it. It was this that made him always sympathetic with younger workers in their spiritual conflicts, quick to see and make the most of every opportunity to help them ([1918]/2005:164-165).

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<sup>297</sup> The chapter ‘Nurture and Admonition’ (Taylor & Taylor [1911]/2005:43-65) describes Taylor’s childhood as disciplined, respectful, kind, industrious, and thoughtful of others; he is depicted as serious, yet with a sunny and bright nature, who enjoyed boyish fun. His mother exercised a gentle, patient, and nurturing form of discipline, while his father was a ‘disciplinarian’, ‘stern and quick-tempered at times’ ([1911]/2005:47, 53-54).

Teresa of Avila counsels that ‘it is good to feel the heat of the battle rather than to presumptuously think that all is well with oneself. The intensity of the struggle [often] is due to the fact that we do not really know ourselves’ (Welch 1892:129). Discernment, self-knowledge, and self-awareness are crucial not only in relating honestly with God and others, but also in taking ownership and responsibility of one’s inner and outer life. In discerning his own vices, and through awareness of his ‘dark side’, Taylor came face to face with his own brokenness and shadow; and in so doing, acted on it by requesting prayer from confidants. Integral to his healing process and growth in adult consciousness, however, would be an increase in self-knowledge and a decrease in self-judgment; or, stated differently, the process of dying to the judgmental false self and rising to become his true self in Christ (cf. 4.2.2 above). As Welch elaborates, ‘I cannot move toward the self while I am loathing the self I am experiencing’ (1982:126).<sup>298</sup> By Taylor’s own admission, his struggle involved self-judgment: ‘I hated myself; I hated my sin; and yet I gained no strength against it’ (Pollock [1962]/1996:195). In terms of soul care, Taylor would need to give greater attention to his own soul needs, since ‘[c]aring for the shadow is the prerequisite for curing it’ (Welch 1982:132). Being kind to oneself as integral to soul care (or care for one’s soul) is particularly pertinent in the context of missionary spirituality; it is a kind of personal responsibility, not in spite of, but precisely because ‘[o]ften there is not as much support for loving ourselves as there is for loving others’ (1982:132).

#### 4.3.4 *Desolation through weakness*

Taylor viewed his weak points and limitations within the economy of grace and acknowledged his need for a saviour, as follows: ‘Our greatest need and difficulties are the very inlets for the SAVIOUR!’ (Beauchamp 1890:24). This section on *desolation* therefore demonstrates that Taylor embraced human weakness as the paradoxical axis for divine strength and power, which is captured in one of his oft-quoted maxims: “All God’s giants have been weak men, who did great things for God because they reckoned on His being with them” (Chang *et al.* 2005:179).<sup>299</sup> In light of these acknowledgements, Broomhall (1911-1994), a respected CIM/OMF biographer, describes Taylor as ‘thoroughly human’:

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<sup>298</sup> On humility and the shadow, Welch’s insights are helpful (1982:132-133), including his elaboration on the ‘underdeveloped, inferior, troublesome areas’ which ‘shock ego-consciousness’ (1982:126).

<sup>299</sup> The above-mentioned quote is translated as follows: ‘所有神的英雄都曾經是軟弱的人。他們之所以能成就大事，因為確信神與他們同在’ (Chang *et al.* 2005:179). Several of Taylor’s key quotations, with their Chinese translation, are cited in ‘Hudson Taylor’s Spiritual Legacy – Quotations’ (2005:170-185).

Feeling deeply, thinking intensely and with catholic generosity, yet dogmatic and authoritarian at the same time, he was emotionally his own greatest handicap and goad to greater endeavour. ... as a servant of all, [he] never nurs[ed] unhealed wounds. He was a great lover and potentially a greater sinner (2005a:xv).

Taylor was evidently 'no plaster saint' (Pollock [1962]/1996:167); and, in terms of work ethic,<sup>300</sup> he might be regarded as 'a workaholic' (Covell 2005-2020). Perhaps he 'had too much of a sense of responsibility and perhaps too little faith that God could do without him' (Doyle 2015b:119), which leads to the observation that the trials he faced 'were partly of his own making' (Wigram 2007:115). The downside is that Taylor's over-emphasis on 'the work' to the neglect of his own health caused him to suffer many breakdowns, which had a detrimental effect on his family life; indeed he paid a 'high price' (Doyle 2015b:119-121). On the other hand, Taylor regarded himself as a friend and brother, not only as a mission director. Considered by many to be a '*servant* of all', he did not ask others 'to do what he was not prepared to do himself, or to endure what he was not prepared to endure' (Pollock [1962]/1996:167). In fact, embracing pressure was a mark of his missionary spirituality:

It doesn't matter, really, how great the pressure is, it only matters where the pressure lies. See that it never comes between you and the Lord – then, the greater the pressure, the more it presses you to His breast (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1958:107).

From the perspective of early September 1869, in Zhenjiang, however, Taylor's experience of pressure seemed contrary to restful intimacy at the Beloved's breast. The articles in the newspapers 'had frayed Taylor's nerves', even though a feeble and indirect apology had been made in local newspapers regarding the scathing attacks on his character and the CIM's reputation; moreover, though China was opening, he 'wilted at the immensity of his task' (Pollock [1962]/1996:195). In fact, based on an unpublished note in the Taylor papers, and without additional evidence,<sup>301</sup> Pollock claims that Taylor was suicidal: 'He sank towards black despair', "the awful temptation", "even to end his own life" ([1962]/1996:195). Wiersbe (1976:65) questions the validity of Pollock's 'bombshell' statement; yet, citing Moses and Elijah as examples, he acknowledges that 'greater men than [Taylor] have done the same' (1976:65). In different terms, Tucker refers to Taylor's crisis as 'undergoing a spiritual battle'; experiencing a 'dark depression'; suffering almost 'a complete mental collapse'; and had 'lost

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<sup>300</sup> Taylor would drive 'his feeble frame to the limit'; would 'work until he was too weary ... and then lie down and sleep whether it was night or day' (Pollock [1962]/1996:167). Over and above mission administration, he had 100 out-patients daily, and preached to nearly 200 people each day ([1962]/1996:167).

<sup>301</sup> Pollock does not specify the source and exact location in the Taylor Papers at the CIM archives, SOAS; hence it is difficult to verify the claim.

his will to go on' (1983:183; 2011:428-429). In Taylor's own words, in his later recollections, this was a time of 'deep spiritual need' and 'alone in Inland China'; ineffective in 'fasting, prayer, meditation on the Word'; conflicted within himself; and feeling defeated in ministry (1902:146):

I was painfully conscious that I was not living all that I was trying to teach the Chinese. Struggling for victory, too often I found myself defeated, until I asked myself whether I ought not to cease to preach, and to retire from missionary work (1902:146).

The point of defeat, however, opened Taylor to a deep spiritual encounter with deep learnings. Timeously, John 4 morphed from an appreciation of 'ancient history' to becoming 'for the first time ... a present message to [his] soul'; hence his unreserved response of accepting and receiving 'the Living Water' (1902:146).<sup>302</sup> The life-giving and nourishing symbol of living water is especially significant when viewed as 'an archetype' that comes to consciousness through a symbol, which in turn becomes a source of integration and a 'transformer of energy', as Welch elaborates:

The symbol is not consciously created but is a spontaneous formation out of the unconscious. This "image" comes forth pregnant with meaning. It provides partial understanding but, as symbol, it points to what cannot be understood (1982:74).

Through deep drinking of the *gustos* of contemplation, the awakening of John 4 brought a profound awareness that '[y]ou cannot be your own Saviour, either in whole or in part' (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1958:109). Consequently, one of his 'favourite texts' in preaching to the Chinese was simply "LORD SAVE *Me*", which infers that this salvation (the verb 'save') unites the Lord (the subject) and me (the object) (Beauchamp 1890:24).

The in-breaking of God into Taylor's desolation is yet another indication of the subversion of holy striving by grace, and his growing consciousness of the need for spiritual transformation (of continually being saved). It was also catalytic for his psychological healing and wellbeing, so that he would learn to embrace his shadow and let go of possible attachments to his own ideals, performance, and perfectionism. In Welch's explication of allowing the 'neglected areas of personality, the shadow' to emerge, the painful encounter is often 'a chief

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<sup>302</sup> Broomhall (1929:162) states that this discovery gave birth to Taylor's booklet entitled *Unfailing Springs*, which was published in *China's Millions* (November 1902); it is included in Dorsey (2006:213-218). In 1883, at a meeting at Grattan Guinness' family home in London, Taylor shared on the themes of 'Unfailing Springs' (Broomhall 2005b:414). Geraldine received her call to China then; sailed to China in January 1888, aged 22; married Howard Taylor in 1894, who had joined the CIM in 1890 (Chang *et al* 2005: 96, 97, 98, 108, 119). By working closely with Taylor and Jennie, and travelling occasionally with them on local and international travels, Howard and Geraldine obtained first-hand experiences as the CIM's first biographers.

source of conflict during the individuation process' (1982:125). When the disruption to a person's normal capacity to cope and conceptualise occurs, the person thinks that his/her very survival seems to be at stake; thus, for Taylor, perhaps the realisation of his utter weakness and powerlessness became a divine invitation to let go of the (ego) controls that imprison the soul:

When the normal controls over life have disappeared, an individual is opened to the possibility of deep learnings. The crisis becomes a religious experience when an invitation from God is discerned at the basis of the crisis ... A letting-go is required so that God can bring about something new in the person's life (Welch 1982:160).

How did Taylor navigate the spiritual crisis? In this regard, his wife Maria is given particular attention here as she was the one who was intimately aware of both his failures and '*conquests*' (Pollock [1962]/1996:167); and her loving presence provided a safe container for her husband's emotional struggles. Griffiths suggests that in Taylor's extraordinary service of others, 'perhaps he failed to recognise both his own and his wife's limitations'; moreover, working so closely together in a pioneering situation, '[a]ll his activities seemed to cascade down on to Maria' (2004:74). Pollock states in stronger terms that Maria's love was 'the one human factor' that remained stable in his disintegrating world of inner and external conflicts; and she was the one who 'stood between Hudson and suicide' ([1962]/1996:195). Although fragile in body, she was 'no insipid, faded, Victorian mamma'; moreover, with a gracious personality, sweet countenance, disarming humour,<sup>303</sup> and 'rare judgment', Taylor consulted her in all matters; thus, some viewed her as 'the backbone of the Mission' ([1962]/1996:145, 169-170). Maria had more experience of China and better language skills than her husband (Griffiths 2004:47); and in spite of poor health,<sup>304</sup> was well qualified to assist in Taylor's administration and running of the CIM, including training the first generation of CIM women in China (2004:45-46, 62). On this basis, Griffiths contends that Maria 'deserves to be better known and respected for her sacrificial ministry' (2004:46).<sup>305</sup> In fact, Taylor (in Shanxi, 1886), commends her testimony of life as perhaps 'the more reliable' with regard to soul rest and calm composure. Recalling

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<sup>303</sup> Maria teased new workers by offering them her cooked 'puppy dumplings'; she also set an example when falling asleep quite comfortably on boats in spite of crawling cockroaches (Taylor & Taylor ([1918]/2005:158).

<sup>304</sup> For example, in the Autumn of 1865, Maria's ill health and complications in pregnancy resulted in the loss of their baby Jane who lived for only half an hour (Griffiths 2004:56-58); during this time, Emily Blatchley and Jennie Faulding were already proving to be invaluable support for the Taylors, with Emily as governess to the children and Jennie assisting with correspondence; both were thus instrumental in the preparations for the CIM's historic departure to China in mid-May 1866 (2004:57).

<sup>305</sup> Griffiths discusses Maria call and commitment to China; parental influence; and outstanding contribution to the CIM (2004:21-75). Taylor gives credit to Maria as a 'precious gift' to him, as well as a blessing to many others during their 'twelve eventful years' of marriage ([1894a]/2010:87); he also credits her father, Samuel Dyer, who was among the first representatives of the London Missionary Society in the East; since 1827, he served for sixteen years amongst the Chinese in Penang, until his death in 1843 ([1894a]/2010:87).

the Yangzhou riot, he states that she was ‘as calm as when in the parlour in London’, which is attributed to being ‘satisfied that GOD’s ordering was the wisest’, as well as ‘the power of the Lord to create *perfect peace* in the heart, and to sustain it unbroken for years’ even in the face of death (Beauchamp 1890:18). That said, Maria’s maternal concern was not only toward her children; by shielding others from the extent of her own hurt in order to not cause any alarm, others were kept calm in anxiety and perplexity. For example, six months pregnant, and after jumping from the second floor of the CIM house with Emily Blatchley, she was ‘faint from loss of blood,’ yet ‘comforting the children’ (Pollock ([1962]/1996:182).

#### 4.3.5 *Delight of soul rest*

This section on ‘*delight*’ focuses specifically on Taylor’s mystical-transformative encounter, which is recorded in his letter to his sister Amelia;<sup>306</sup> and includes several mystical elements, namely: spiritual illumination (‘I saw it all’); spiritual delight (‘when I saw, oh how joy flowed!’); a spiritual release (from the weight of striving to a restful abiding); and the transforming reality of “Not I, but Christ” (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:165, 169). It is not possible to ascertain exactly ‘how the miracle was wrought’ ([1932]/1958:11-112); however, insights might be drawn from McCarthy’s reading of the book *Christ is All* (Law 1867),<sup>307</sup> which he had borrowed from Taylor. McCarthy became convinced that ‘striving, effort, longing, hoping for better days to come, is not the true way to happiness, holiness or usefulness’, and cited the following extract in a letter to Taylor (from Hangzhou to Zhenjiang):

To let my loving Savior work in me His will, my sanctification ... Abiding, not striving nor struggling, looking off unto Him, trusting Him for present power ... Not a striving to have faith, or to increase our faith, but a looking off to the Faithful One seems all we need, a resting in the Loved One entirely, for time and for eternity. It does not appear to me as anything new, only formerly misapprehended (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:170).

Capturing in nuce the contrast between holy striving and wholly abiding, these words struck a deep chord with Taylor, though the breakthrough came specifically through John 15, ‘a favourite chapter’ since his conversion (Dorsey 2006:181). The dilemma for the first 20 years of his Christian life is that he had misread ‘I am the true vine’ as ‘I am the true root’ (2006:181; Beauchamp 1890:69), which resulted in an intense and strenuous striving. Only through an

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<sup>306</sup> Taylor’s letter of October 17, 1869, is a recollection of the experience (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:172-179). His mother and sister Amelia were his trusted confidants and spiritual companions.

<sup>307</sup> The reference for McCarthy’s reading is Chapter 8 of *Christ is All: The Gospel in Leviticus*, by Henry Law (1867:50-56); viewed at: <https://www.path2prayer.com/famous-christians-their-lives-and-writings-including-free-books/j-hudson-taylor-pioneer-missionary-to-china/henry-law-christ-is-all>

awakening to and recognition<sup>308</sup> of Christ as ‘the whole Vine’, not just the root, did he realise ‘that nothing had to be *got out*, that it was all to be enjoyed *in*’; by extension, ‘the whole life of the vine was to be enjoyed in the Vine itself’ (1890:69). He therefore captures ‘the secret’ of soul rest in relation to the fullness of Christ the whole Vine:

Here, I feel, is the secret: not asking how I am to get sap out of the vine into myself, but remembering that Jesus is the Vine – the root, stem, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruit, all indeed. Aye, and for more, too! He is the soil and sunshine, air and rain – more than we can ask, think or desire. Let us not, then, want to get anything out of Him, but rejoice in being ourselves in Him – one with Him, and consequently, with all His fullness. Not seeking for faith to bring holiness, but that – inseparably one with Him – this holiness is ours, and accepting the fact, find it so indeed (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:172-173).

Taylor’s application of the Vine might be stretched and exaggerated, even taken to ‘an extra-biblical extreme’, as Anderson suggests (2013:106); however, the infusion of spiritual delight (the *gustos* of contemplation) is difficult to articulate in precise terms, hence his attempt at maximal expression. In similar vein, Tyler’s comment on ‘mystic speech’ is apt, that instead of looking for ‘perfection and smoothness’, and finding ways to tidy it up, the ‘very coarseness and inconsistency is what makes them alive and gives them the “passionate intensity” as they grapple with the transcendent’ (2011:233). The elements of numinosity and ineffability contribute to the grappling, as the transformative effect is not immediately intelligible to the person concerned, as evident in Taylor’s letter to his sister a month later: ‘I do not know how far I may be able to make myself intelligible about it, for there is nothing new or strange or wonderful – and yet, all is new!’ (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1958:112-113).

The delight of soul rest, based on the foregoing extract, is therefore summarised as threefold: first, the realisation of our oneness with Christ; second, the restful disposition of being ourselves in Christ; and third, the release from human striving to achieve the work of grace. By way of elaboration, first, the realisation of oneness with Christ involves the aspect of *intimacy* – an inseparable union wrought by Christ, which is more than we could ever ask, think, or desire; thus, when accepted fully as a fact and received wholeheartedly with joy, holiness becomes ours by grace (not by our achievement). Second, a restful disposition infers an *integrity* of being ourselves in the fullness of the Vine – a wholeness of being fully human and fully alive – and therefore of accepting ourselves and others in Christ. Third, the release is

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<sup>308</sup> As previously highlighted (cf. 4.2.4), Auden comments that the revelation received is different from ‘seeing things’ as in dreams or visions, as mystics do not see with their physical eyes (1964:10-11). Taylor’s ‘seeing’ was certainly not based on visions or apparitions, but on spiritual illumination by the word of God.

the sense of *immediacy*, a consciousness of the grace that flows from the Vine (the divine life) which subverts human efforts of striving for that which grace alone can achieve.

The revelatory impact, or an awakening to the ‘secret’ of soul rest, at this kairotic moment may also be interpreted as a birth of consciousness,<sup>309</sup> adapting Jung’s statement that ‘[t]here is no birth of consciousness without pain’ (Welch 1982:129). Employing the symbolism of the paschal mystery, of dying to self and rising in Christ, the pain may be caused by a death of the dominant ‘I’, which gives birth to the ‘Not I, but Christ’<sup>310</sup> (as elucidated in 4.2.2 above). Unitive experiences can be painful as they usually pose the threat of ‘dying-to-self’ because there is ‘an unconscious part of us that does not like dying in any way’; yet the dying/rising is also an invitation to living more fully (May [1982]/1992:84-85). Since a unitive experience or a birth of consciousness is usually pregnant with personal meaning (on both the immanent and transcendent levels), the ‘unconscious life of an individual’ is ‘the womb where rebirth may take place’; therefore, the retrieval of the hidden treasures of the unconscious becomes integral to mid-life transformation (Welch 1982:130).<sup>311</sup>

Given that John 15 was one of Taylor’s favourite biblical texts since his conversion, its ‘return’ at mid-life connects a golden thread between his *egoic* foundation and his *transegoic* integration; hence the significance of the mystical symbolism of the True Vine in his individuation.<sup>312</sup> This illustrates Gollnick’s observation, that though a powerful religious experience can cause ‘dramatic shifts in a person’s spirituality and religion at almost any point in life, the norm is continuity with past attitudes and values’ (2005:211).<sup>313</sup> In similar vein, Welch elucidates the interplay between a powerful image and childhood memories:

The predominant image of wholeness will center me and provide a free, protected space where I may play with my life. A powerful image which addresses the core of my personhood will help reconstellate the self, put me in touch with my wider

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<sup>309</sup> Terms such as a ‘second conversion’ (rebirth) and a ‘personal Pentecost’ (awakening to the Spirit) are apt (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:172-173; Broomhall 1929:158-159). Furthermore, ‘treasures in darkness’ and ‘the silver lining’ are suitable metaphors to describe the hidden factors which were brought to light in Taylor’s spiritual crisis. The chapter ‘*Treasures of Darkness*’ (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:137-216) covers the period 1868-1870; similarly, Broomhall’s sub-section, a ‘*Silver Lining*’ (2005b:109-111), describes 1869 within the broader context of the section entitled ‘*Refiner’s Fire*’, and covers the period 1868-1875 (2005b:1-244).

<sup>310</sup> The healing effected by his transformation is termed ‘deliverance’; thus, no longer bondage, failure, fear, weakness, but liberty, victory, and ‘a restful sense of sufficiency in Another’ (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1958:112).

<sup>311</sup> The unconscious, however, is ‘also the place where a person may be bewitched, caught in collective, instinctual living’ (Welch 1982:130); hence the need for discernment (personal and communal).

<sup>312</sup> From a psycho-spiritual perspective, healing ‘which is experienced within the psyche is an expression of the healing love of God drawing the soul into union’ (Welch 1982:160).

<sup>313</sup> The ‘secrecy’ of spiritual experience is dispelled through a deeper understanding of the dynamic dialectic between the human and the divine, as Barry’s insights clarify: ‘every experience I have depends on my prior expectation. I experience nothing without having assimilated it to schemata or structures built up over my history. All experience is partly a construction of the one who experiences’ (1989:29).

life. Sometimes positive childhood memories can be the beginning of contacting the self once again (Welch 1982:55-56).

A second golden thread which connects Taylor's *egoic* foundation and his *transegoic* integration phase is the phrase 'the finished work of Christ', as identified in McCarthy's letter (citing *Christ is All*), as follows: 'He is most holy who has most of Christ within, and joys most fully in the finished work' (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:170).<sup>314</sup> Taylor's apprehension of Christ's 'finished work' at conversion returns (a retrieval from the unconscious) and develops into a consciousness of an abiding, indwelling presence; by implication, the 'finished work' of Christ is an ongoing process of transformation (Phil. 1:6). Consequently, Taylor's desire for 'entire sanctification' in the *egoic* phase takes on maximal meaning at mid-life, where holiness, oneness, happiness, wholeness, restfulness, and fruitfulness all merge into a unitive experience of abiding. In sum, the delight of soul rest is not needing 'to get anything out of [Christ]'; but rather, to 'rejoice in being ourselves in Him', in union and communion with the True Vine.

The transformative effect on Taylor personally is evident on several levels, as follows: his correspondence took on 'a new tone'; and though very busy, he was 'at leisure in spirit!'; from 'a toiling, burdened' man, he became less worried, more peaceful, and relying on God in a new way (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:173-174). Instead of working late at night, he altered his work and sleep patterns by going to bed between nine and ten o'clock, in order to begin the day at six-thirty (Broomhall 2005b:152). Elsewhere it states that he woke at five o'clock and devoted two hours to Bible study and prayer before the work of the day; thus 'his own soul was fed, and from him flowed the living water to others' (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:173-174). Mystical transformation thus provided soul rest, boundless joy, and new zeal within the midst of his activity, which he describes in a letter to his sister a month later:

Mind and body will not bear more than a certain amount of strain, or do more than a certain amount of work. As to work – mine was never so plentiful, so responsible or so difficult, but the weight and strain are all gone. The last month or more has been, perhaps, the happiest of my life ... (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1955:112).

In terms of observations from the CIM community, Taylor is described as a 'new man in a new world', testifying to 'what his whole life was telling from that time onward to the glorious end' (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:172). He did not claim that his newfound delight of soul rest was *his* spiritual secret, based on his ingenuity. Quite the contrary; he took John McCarthy and

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<sup>314</sup> The statement was preceded by the following lines from *Christ is All*: "The Lord Jesus received is holiness begun; the Lord Jesus cherished is holiness advancing; the Lord Jesus counted upon as never absent would be holiness complete" (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:169).

Jennie Faulding's letters with him to the household gathering to testify of the Lord's work in his soul ([1918]/2005:172). He also shared with his Chinese helpers in Hangzhou and in Ningbo (including Wang Lae-djun and Mr Tsiu), the realisation of his 'oneness with the risen, exalted Saviour', the 'indissoluble union with Him', and his years of struggle to abide in Christ (Broomhall 2005b:109-111). In sharing these insights for the spiritual edification of the community, not only as mission director but as a brother and friend, affirms Taylor's view that the 'rest of faith' was 'the normal<sup>315</sup> Christian life, not some aspect of high attainment in spiritual reality' (Wigram 2007:107). Moreover, by reiterating that it was not *his* spiritual secret, the dangers and temptations 'implicit in all first-hand experience' are avoided, as noted by Auden (1964:33).<sup>316</sup> For this precise reason, the Exchanged Life is elucidated within the broader context of 19th century evangelical spirituality (cf. 4.2.5 above).

Taking a cue from John's Gospel, the communal spirit is significant on two levels: first, Jesus' abiding in the disciples overflows into relationships of love, friendship and intimacy (Kanagaraj 1998:280-281); and second, 'true mysticism' in the Johannine sense is 'marked not by seclusion, but by active participation in the affairs of human beings with love and obedience to Jesus' words' (1998:281). Mystical experience is therefore not intended for exclusion, elitism, or quietism; on the contrary, 'it usually releases a flood of psychic energy ... When in love, the soldier fights more bravely, the thinker thinks more clearly, the carpenter fashions with greater skill' (Auden 1964:21).

#### 4.3.6 *Darkness through suffering*

This section on *darkness* elucidates a period of deeper suffering than the period of *desolation*, and is described as 'utter desolation' by the official biographers (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1958:124). It demonstrates that the authenticity of mystical experience is often tested by suffering, grief, loss, and trials;<sup>317</sup> furthermore, the fact that Taylor did not return to his previous depths of near despair attests to the efficacy of his transformation. In fact, the

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<sup>315</sup> Since Nee discusses Taylor's Exchanged Life in *The Normal Christian Life* (1958:51-52), it is worth noting that Nee was influenced by Keswick, and Hudson Taylor (Chow 2013:48). Keswick teaching interprets the 'normal Christian life' as characterised by 'a filling of the Holy Spirit, having a consistent victory over temptations and growing toward the likeness of Christ' (2013:48). Drawing a contrast between 'average and normal', carnal or spiritual', it is suggested that 'the majority of Christians have not yet received the fullness of what God has offered' (2013:48).

<sup>316</sup> The temptations include: first, imagining that 'one is a special person to whom the common rules do not apply'; second, intellectually supposing that since the experience 'is new to oneself, it is new to the human race'; and third, 'the thinkers of the past cannot possibly throw light on it', therefore 'one must construct a new philosophy of one's own' (Auden 1964:33).

<sup>317</sup> Note, for example, Jesus' forty days in the wilderness following his baptism in the River Jordan (Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22; Jn 1:29-34); and the apostle Paul's twelve years in the desert after his Damascus experience (Acts 9).

Exchanged Life was not only transformative in the moment, it prepared him for a ‘crucible of faith’ and the most trying experiences (Broomhall 2005b:109).<sup>318</sup> This section therefore illustrates the paradox that God is present, though hidden, and mysteriously working all things for good, albeit painful and humbling; which is aptly underpinned by the symbol of ‘night’ (or the ‘dark night’, a *sanjuanist* term, also employed in Chapter 3).<sup>319</sup> As May explicates, it serves as an invitation to ‘an increasing spaciousness in which the eternal mystery of God that lies beyond these knowable attributes resides’; and involves various levels of ‘loss of specific attachments and motivations’; a ‘loss of understanding’; the ‘loss of some element of faith’, etc. ([1982]/1992:1089-110). The darkness is thus a graced space to attune to the obscure ways of God and to tread an unfamiliar path, which on a deep level is familiar to us:

To some extent we can assume that various dimensions of the night are *always* going on in our lives. God is always working obscurely within us. And, even more mysterious, some part of us is saying yes to God’s invitation to go where we do not want to go. Viewed in this way, the dark night of the soul is not an event one passes through and gets beyond, but rather a deep ongoing process that characterizes our spiritual life. In this sense, the dark night is a person’s hidden life with God (May 2004:95).

Saying yes to God’s invitation to go where we do not want to go is prescient in the face of suffering, danger, hardship, death, and even persecution; these eventualities did not deter Taylor’s vision and resolve, as he was convinced that ‘it is only in the trial of GOD’s grace that its *beauty and power* can be seen’ (Beauchamp 1890:62). For example, 1870 is marked as the ‘darkest and hardest year’ in the CIM’s history until the Boxer Rebellion of 1900<sup>320</sup> (Lyall [1965]/1976:40). In Tien-tsin, the Sisters of Mercy, the French priests and Consul were massacred, and Taylor was required to make urgent decisions regarding the relocation of the CIM workers to other cities, or allowing them to remain and learn that ‘there is something in the Gospel worth risking life for’ (Beauchamp 1890:50; Taylor 1902:146). In the end, led by prayer and God’s direction, they remained and the missionaries’ very lives provided an

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<sup>318</sup> The relevant period, 1871-1875, coincides with this section, which Broomhall describes as ‘Crucible of Faith’ (2005b:152-238).

<sup>319</sup> Discussing the diverse and widespread use of the phrase the ‘Dark Night of the Soul’, Payne’s article (2021:85-101) locates it in its classic context, as a ‘text and symbol’ of the Spanish Carmelite, John of the Cross; and specifies it as ‘a theological category even more than a psychological one’. In other words, in John’s sense, ‘not every painful adversity automatically qualifies as a “dark night of soul”’; the key element is transformation, and the outcomes are not predictable or controllable. He reassures that ‘loss, disillusionment, and confusion are not necessarily something to fear or avoid, but a necessary step on the path of human and spiritual growth’ (2021:88).

<sup>320</sup> Of the total of 188 martyrs killed, 135 were adults and 53 children; of the total, 159 were in Shanxi (Broomhall 2005b:716). The CIM lost 58 missionaries and 21 children; and more than 2,000 Chinese Christians were killed (Chang *et al* 2005:115).

‘illustration of trusting in GOD as I believe ten years’ preaching would not have conveyed to them’ (Beauchamp 1890:50). Moreover, they learned ‘more of the loving-kindness of the Lord than in any previous year’; in turn, the Chinese Christians learned to lean upon God rather than on foreign protection and support, as they witnessed the missionaries’ way of leaning upon God in trial and danger (1890:50; Taylor 1902:146-147; Broomhall 2005b:150).

Taylor recalls 1870 as ‘the greatest [trial] I have ever known’ (Beauchamp 1890:49-50); yet, paradoxically, ‘a time of deepened spiritual joy and rest’ (Taylor 1902:146). It may have ‘equalled if not exceeded, those of the previous sixteen years of my missionary labour in the aggregate’; however, except for two months, it was ‘the happiest and most joyous year’ of his life; the reason is attributed to the profound and practical lessons of ‘present real oneness with Christ’ (Broomhall 2005b:150). By way of summary, in February, their little son Samuel died of lung disease; in March, the three eldest Taylor children left for schooling and better health in England; in June, the anxiety and danger of the Tientsin massacre reached its peak,<sup>321</sup> and in July, baby Noel died only a fortnight old, followed by Maria’s death to cholera on July 23 (Taylor 1902:146; Broomhall 1929:160; Chang *et al* 2005:53-54). She was a great loss, as ‘a highly competent, caring and self-effacing wife, mother and missionary colleague’ (Broomhall 2005b:149). Yet, even with the loss of his darling wife and two children in five months; and in addition to stress, which brought on an attack of dysentery, Taylor ‘was still carrying all the responsibility for the leadership and pastoral and medical care of the others’ (Griffiths 2004:72-73, 77). In this instance, Griffiths regards Taylor as ‘an affectionate and sensitive person, albeit stubborn and single-minded’ (2004:72-73, 77).

In different vein, Barr comments that during this period, ‘the spiritual intensity of the medieval mystic burns through much of Taylor’s writing’,<sup>322</sup> which was ‘threaded with the imagery of a dry soul thirsting for the river of God’ (1972:49).<sup>323</sup> As underscored by Underhill, a mystic ‘is not a person who practises unusual forms of prayer, but a person whose life is ruled by this thirst’ (Menziés 1946:107). Living water (like the Vine) had become abiding symbols

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<sup>321</sup> Further details on the anti-foreign agitation and the massacre of 21 foreigners, including the French Consul are provided by Taylor & Taylor ([1932]/1958:124). Regarding 1870 as ‘the hardest year’, Broomhall states that ‘in different ways 1871 was harder still’ (2005b:167). In fact, the 1870s was a period of great adversity, notably, many crises between China and the West, and China and Japan; yet Taylor’s strategy was to advance into the interior despite the new mood of protests in China (2005b:24, 135-151).

<sup>322</sup> It was this ‘essential element of his charisma’ that awed and attracted his followers, and also sustained him through this crisis and many others (Barr 1972:49).

<sup>323</sup> By comparison, ‘water’ was an overarching symbol in Teresa of Avila’s writings. Her symbol of water for the soul-garden, or the interior garden, illustrates four types of watering, and refer to the ‘prayer of quiet’ (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1980:323-324). Teresa sensed these types earlier in life, but only develops and articulates it clearly in the Fourth Mansion of the *Interior Castle*, Chapter 1 (May 2004:112-127, 208).

for Taylor, as they provided the nourishing contact with God during the weary nights of loneliness and grief; missing the ‘voices of the children far away in England’; and beset once again with illness, as per the official biographers’ record:

Twenty times a day perhaps, as I felt the heart-thirsting coming back, I cried to Him, “Lord you promised! You promised that I should never thirst.” And whether I called by day or night, how quickly He came and satisfied my sorrowing heart. So much so that I often wondered whether it were possible that my loved one who had been taken could be enjoying more of His presence than I was in my lonely chamber (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1958:124-125).

Though the ‘recognition of not-knowing’ in times of deep darkness leaves one ‘utterly dependent upon and abandoned to the unknown and unknowable essence of God at the helm’ (May [1982]/1992:108), in Taylor’s case,<sup>324</sup> he felt a sense of God’s near presence ‘more than ever’; assured by the knowledge that ‘God does or permits *all* things and causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him’ (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1958:124-125). By embracing God’s will as ‘love in action’, the deep void was filled not only with tears, but by a union of human and divine love:

She is not lost. She does not love me less now nor do I love her less or less rejoice in her. And I do from day to day and every day so delight in the love of Jesus, satisfy my thirst heart when most desolate from His fullness, feed and rest in green pastures in the recognition that His will has been done .... (Barr 1972:49-50).

Taylor’s spiritual thirst was a catharsis also in this time of illness, suffering from ‘a badly deranged liver’, a ‘painful depression of spirit’ following sleepless nights, as well as chest trouble and difficulties in breathing (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1958:129). In this time of deep spiritual need, he interprets Jn 6:35 as a present tense, continuous drinking; and therefore suggests it as a continuous habit of the soul:

It seems to me that where many of us err is in leaving our drinking in the past, while our thirst continues present. What we need is to be drinking – yes, thankful for each occasion which drives us to drink ever more deeply of the living water ([1932]/1958:129).

As a spiritual practice, drinking ever more deeply with gratitude from the living fount became essential in Taylor’s missionary spirituality, since the darkness became an unfolding journey of utter dependence on God, and a deepening of faith, hope, love, and grace. Drinking of the living water (the gift of the Spirit) is thus a nourishing practice and a gift of the dark night. To

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<sup>324</sup> Taylor’s spirituality in the main may be aptly located in the mystical tradition of *cataphasis* (affirmative ways of speaking of God), in contrast to *apophasis* (the use of negation); these terms are elucidated in Chapter 3 (cf. 3.3.3).

reiterate, the dark night is not an experience, nor a realization, nor a phase of development, but ‘the essence of one’s ongoing spiritual journey’ (May [1982]/1992:107-108).

The following year, on Taylor’s voyage to England (with his little son Charles), rays of hope beamed into the darkness as Taylor welcomed with open arms a budding romance with Jennie Faulding, a close companion to both him and Maria. Hudson and Jennie’s marriage in London, on November 28, 1871 (Chang *et al.* 2005:55-56) ushered in a second phase for the CIM, with Jennie as his new darling, soul companion, and mission partner.<sup>325</sup> However, it was devastating news to Emily Blatchley who believed that she should have been ‘the next Mrs Taylor’ (Tucker 2011:429).<sup>326</sup> Barr notes that the deaths of Maria (July 1870) and Emily (July 1874)<sup>327</sup> mark ‘the end of the true frontier days’ for the CIM; and by 1874 the surviving members of the *Lammermuir* party were the ‘old hands who showed the ropes’ (1972:51). Within this communal contribution, Tucker’s assertion is worth noting, that Taylor did not develop his vision for China alone, as Maria was ‘indispensable in setting the plan in motion’, and Jennie was ‘in the front lines of carrying out the plan’ (1983:173). As this chapter has elucidated thus far, he would not have coped in his spiritual crises without Maria, McCarthy, Jennie, and Emily (and the prayers of his confidants in England). This companionship and family spirit in ministry illustrates the hope offered by the Fourth Gospel:

It gives hope of an abiding place where women can belong as subjects in communion with men, and in harmony with creation ... The Johannine symbolism of abiding and friendship opens the way to a new sense of personhood, grounded in the love of the Spirit. It signifies participating in the Trinitarian life of God and in the communion of the saints, both within and beyond the visible world (Lee 2002:109).

#### 4.3.7 *Dignity of wholly abiding*

God grants to the soul ‘great dignity’, asserts Teresa of Avila, therefore it ‘is capable of much more than we can imagine’ (Welch 1982:55),<sup>328</sup> however, the paradox of dignity is an increase

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<sup>325</sup> Taylor’s second marriage was not without struggle. After their stillborn twins in China in April 1873, Jennie bore two more children. They made enormous sacrifices through long separations; for example, in 1876, when Taylor returned to China, Jennie remained to care for the six Taylor children (Griffiths 2004:78-79, 82).

<sup>326</sup> Emily Blatchley (1842-1874) passed away in England, and some say she died of ‘a broken heart’ (Tucker 2011:429). To clarify, by 1870, when she returned to England with the four older Taylor children, she was already suffering from tuberculosis and growing weaker (Griffiths 2004:73). Both Hudson and Jennie agonised over Emily’s death, as they had lost a dear friend and pioneer missionary since the inception of the CIM.

<sup>327</sup> Griffiths (2004:56-80) delineates Emily’s significant role as governess and ‘second mother’ to the Taylor children, in China and in England; at the age of 28, with her experience in China, she was Taylor’s ‘mouthpiece’ in the running of the London office, including editing and distributing the CIM’s *Occasional Paper*; competent and reliable, she used ‘her gifts to do “a man’s job” so long as it was not official’ (2004:79-80).

<sup>328</sup> Teresa of Avila’s writings focus on the life of interior prayer, as illustrated in the *Interior Castle* (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1980:261-452); therefore, people are encouraged not to stop at the fourth mansion, which is quite common, but to move to the deeper levels of union and integration in the seventh mansion.

in humility ('Not I, but Christ'). Through God's secret working in the darkness to liberate the soul from attachments, space is created for the indwelling Christ so that the soul may live more completely in Christ; hence a liberation that 'also brings us to the realization of our true nature' (May 2004:68). Since the soul's dignity is our true nature in Christ (the Image and Word of God Incarnate), it is apt that *dignity* follows *darkness*. As this section will elucidate, Taylor's liberation involved a clarification of his misconceptions on abiding, and a liberation from misplaced striving; hence, the present focus on the '*dignity of wholly abiding*', with particular attention to his more developed articulation over three decades.<sup>329</sup>

First, Taylor considers it is 'a privilege ...to be allowed to abide in [Christ]'; and 'a blessed thing ... to be commanded to abide in [Christ]' (Dorsey 2006:184), which underscores the dignity that God grants to the soul, precisely because of Christ's indwelling presence. However, Taylor admits to having been 'in the dark on the subject', as he 'confounded it altogether'; though he read it 'many thousand times [he] never for a moment saw what it meant' (2006:184-185). His misconceptions are illustrated in several ways (2006:185-186). First, he thought abiding meant a sort of athletic climbing up a rope, or a pole; yet he was unable to manage or master the climbing. Second, it was intended for 'a sort of spiritual aristocracy, which very few people ever could attain or reach to'. Third, he confused 'feeding' upon Christ, which is 'a voluntary act', instead of 'being one with Him', whether asleep or awake, working or resting. These misconceptions were not merely a cognitive or theological conundrum; in fact, they caused visceral discomfort and 'very great distress indeed'. At times, he adopted a rather unreasonable modus operandi of trying to feed all day and all night spiritually, which resulted in 'a sort of almost religious dyspepsia' (2006:186). Even after attending to his patients in China (Taylor was also a medical doctor),<sup>330</sup> he would head off into his closet almost in despair, feeling the need to confess that he had not thought of Christ for those two hours (2006:186). His conundrum was also based on a misunderstanding of the presence of God:

I had thought that abiding in Christ meant keeping our hearts so fixed upon Christ - so constantly meditating upon Him and dwelling in Him - that we never lost the consciousness of His presence. I thought we were continually, so to speak, to realize His presence, and continually to look to Him for blessing and help and guidance (2006:186).

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<sup>329</sup> For example, 'Abiding in Christ' was Taylor's topic in 1888, at Moody's conference in North America (Dorsey 2006:179-191); and 'The True Vine', in 1896, at the Keswick Convention (2006:279-283).

<sup>330</sup> Taylor's initial medical training was interrupted by his youthful eagerness to reach China; thus, upon his first return to England, he completed his training, between May 1861 and July 1862, and qualified as a member of the 'Royal College of Surgeons of England' (Chang *et al.* 2005:37-38). That autumn, he also qualified for the 'Royal College of Surgeons' Licentiate in Midwifery' (2005:38).

It was in this time of spiritual despair in inland China (as elucidated in 4.4.4. above), that his eyes and heart were enlightened. In reading his Greek Testament, he discovered for the very first time the connection between the phrase “dwelleth in Me, and I in him” (Jn 6:56),<sup>331</sup> and the word ‘abide’ in John 15 (Dorsey 2006:185), which he also discovered means ‘remain’ (Jn 15:1-11). Having read it ‘a hundred times over’ in the Authorized Version, he missed the import of the meaning of ‘Abide in me, and I in you’; however, by tracing the verb from Jn 6 to Jn 15, the eyes of his heart were enlightened (‘I saw at once-why!’). This realisation underscores Kourie’s assertion on mystical transformation, that ‘scripture can be a vector which leads us to ever higher levels of consciousness and energy’, enabling us to ‘reach our potential for human integration ...’ (2012:41). It aptly applies to Taylor, whose ‘seeing’ brought a resolution to his confusion, and a new consciousness of the truth of abiding and union/oneness with Christ:

Abiding in Jesus isn’t fixing our attention on Christ, but it is being one with Him. And it doesn’t make any difference what we are doing, or whether we are asleep or awake. A man is abiding just as much when he is sleeping for Jesus as when he is awake and working for Jesus. Oh, it is a very sweet thing to have one’s mind just resting there (Dorsey 2006:186).

In the Johannine context, ‘seeing’ is a kind of ‘knowing’ (Kanagaraj 1998:273) and refers to ‘the initial apprehension’ as well as ‘a continuous appreciation and understanding’ (1998:273). Therefore, ‘seeing’ Jesus is an experiential knowing of the indwelling God, since Jesus and the Father are one (1998:274) – a relational, restful and receptive disposition, in contrast to the mental and optical strain of ‘fixing our attention’ on Jesus. Furthermore, eternal life is not static, but dynamic; it becomes a present reality, and an ‘active participation in the very life of God’ whereby we can participate ‘even now by entering into a deeper communion with God through Jesus Christ’ (1998:274). Through Taylor’s awakening to the fullness of the Vine (cf. 4.4.5 above), ‘seeing it all’ may thus be summed up as follows: his apprehension of oneness with Christ (union), conjoined with the mutual indwelling of abiding (I in you, and you in me), provided him with the essentials for a continuous appreciation and unfolding (communion). This present participation in the divine life is the grace that flows *from* God (from the Vine into the branch), which Taylor had tried in vain through human effort to get it *out* and *into* himself.

Second, the dignity of the soul is entirely dependent on the ‘skill of the cultivator’ (Creator) for its sustenance and sustainability, while the ‘culture of the vine’ (creation) is the prescribed environment for its proper cultivation and development (Dorsey 2006:183). Taylor

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<sup>331</sup> Jn 6:56, which links eating and drinking with abiding, is ‘the first appearance ... of language of mutual abiding or indwelling’ in the Fourth Gospel, and subsequently appears six times (Peterson 2015:55).

admitted to being ignorant of Christ's 'keeping power' (Beauchamp 1890:110-111), and became accustomed to the ebb and flow of his spiritual life, believing that 'it is only in heaven that we are to be kept' (1890:26). For the first two decades of his Christian life, he did not understand the skill of the cultivator, nor the culture of the vine. This is illustrated in his letter to his children in England (in 1870), which not only reveals the tenderness of a father's heart,<sup>332</sup> but also his misconceptions of trying to his 'own heart right, but it would always be going wrong' (his method of cultivation); however, in learning to 'give up trying myself' and accepting the Lord's offer to 'keep it for me' (the skill of the Creator), he urges his darling children 'to give [their] hearts to Jesus to keep everyday' (Taylor & Taylor [1932]/1958:126). In a letter to Emily around the same time, he writes of the 'rest and peace of heart' and the incomparable union with Christ that he was enjoying, which he did not believe 'were possible down here! It is heaven begun below, is it not?' ([1932]/1958:126). These different experiences, in a time of grief and loneliness, were eclipsed by a later realisation, that 'however faulty [his] poor life may be', abiding is already occurring as one feeds on Christ:

... feeding upon Christ is not a privilege or attainment of a spiritual aristocracy – of some very few of God's children ... but if I have fed upon Christ I am abiding in Him, and I am to continue to feed in order that I may grow (Dorsey 2006:187).

Third, to remain in the vine (wholly abiding) is the delight of soul rest – a dignity granted to the soul by God. Through John 15, Taylor unfurls the meaning of 'remain', as follows: 'The branch has only to remain in the vine to enjoy everything that is in the vine' (2006:181). John 15 clarified for Taylor the meaning of 'true', which he refers to as 'substance', contrasting it with 'that which is the shadow' or 'a copy', rather than the opposite of 'false', as follows:

just as the tree in the orchard is a true tree, and the copy of it in your picture, or painting, you know, is only after all a picture. The vines in our vineyards are only pictures of something higher and more substantial, that was in the Divine mind before the vine-tree was created. Thus Christ says: "I am the true vine." Oh, there is a world of meaning in those words! (2006:181).

The 'world of meaning'<sup>333</sup> included his realisation that the Divine intention is the bestowal of the 'whole Christ-life' to the believer (inseparable) for 'each one to enjoy it all'; not giving 'a

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<sup>332</sup> The fatherhood aspect is worth highlighting, as 'God as Father' is the 'primary symbol for God within the Johannine narrative', which occurs 'well over a hundred times' in the Fourth Gospel, and 'more often ... than anywhere else in the New Testament' (Lee 2002:110, 112). The fatherhood of God gave Jesus his divine and human identity, even though it is set within the complex fabric of the Old Testament Judaism (2002:133).

<sup>333</sup> Both 'the living Vine' and 'living water' became significant symbols in Taylor's spiritual transformation and *transegoic* integration; they not only awakened him to the fullness of life in Christ, they also nourished him throughout his second half of life. As elucidated in Chapter 3 (cf. 3.3.7), the poetic extract on 'the living Vine', by Hamilton King (Beauchamp 1890:30; also cited in *Union and Communion*) draws on the suggestion that

little faith to one, and a little zeal to another, and so on; but He ... gives us all in CHRIST' (Beauchamp 1890:67; Dorsey 2006:182). The life that flows from God is the substance of our original dignity, human identity, and spiritual integrity. Thus, through the bestowal of the 'whole Christ-life', Taylor's *transegoic* integration became an unfolding of his true nature (*dignity*): of being himself-in-Christ (*integrity*) through abiding in Christ (*intimacy*), and enjoying union with the indwelling Christ (*mutuality*). Moreover, since our true nature/personhood is 'defined by God – a creation made in God's own image' (Hernandez 2008:50), our unique embodiment also symbolises 'something higher and more substantial, that was in the Divine mind before [I] was created'; in other words, our true self in Christ is 'the self that [we are] called to be from the dawn of eternity' (2008:50).

Fourth, wholly abiding is dependent upon weakness, which seems anomalous to dignity; however, such is culture of the vine for bearing fruit in love. Taylor testified publicly that he used to think that he was 'not strong enough to abide – the fact is that we are not weak enough to abide' (Dorsey 2006:282).<sup>334</sup> He therefore describes abiding as 'restfully and peacefully as a babe on its mother's breast ... everything is done for it' (2006:283),<sup>335</sup> which echoes Psalm 131. This restfulness produces fruit-bearing and does not require that we do something in order to be able to bear fruit; instead, Taylor states: 'Stay where you are and stay as you are, and just let the life of the Vine fulfil itself in you' (2006:282). Being in the divine flow (the choreography of dance and being in step with the Spirit), requires both a willingness to follow, as well as a vulnerability to be shaped, sharpened, and strengthened by the skilful pruning of the cultivator. Wholly abiding is thus akin to a contemplative way of being:

a gradual easing of the feeling of autonomous effort, the white-knuckled striving that seeks to control and manage everything. In place of the striving, one finds a growing willingness, an increasing *receptivity* in the sense of welcoming with open arms (May 2004:100).

#### 4.3.8 *Detachment through letting go*

As a natural outflow of the dignity of soul, and as a manifestation of 'Not I, but Christ', detachment is embodied in the practice of *letting go*. Though Taylor does not explicitly use the terminology of *detachment* and *letting go*, he emphasises *self-forgetfulness* as a prerequisite in

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Jesus himself chose the image of the vine; moreover, as a symbol, it is pregnant with meaning and performs on many levels, namely: life, passion, blood, wine, celebration, joy, etc.

<sup>334</sup> Extracted from Taylor's message on the topic 'The True Vine', at the Keswick Convention, 1896 (Dorsey 2006:279).

<sup>335</sup> Taylor also uses the example of a babe's bodily growth to explicate mutual indwelling and our inseparability with Christ; once food has been 'digested and assimilated' into the body, which nourishes and becomes inseparable from the child's 'hair, brains, flesh, nerve and muscle, it cannot be undone (Dorsey 2006); in addition, he uses illustrations of familial relationships (2006:169-170; 200-201) and nature (2006:182, 185).

fruitfulness, in order that fruit be borne of the Spirit – not from egocentricity, the false self, or ‘the flesh’ (Taylor [1894]/1931:17). To reiterate Gollnick’s psycho-spiritual insights, as the sense of “I-ness” fades, the ego ceases to be ‘the primary director of a person’s life’ (2005:174); and without disappearing entirely, the ego/I-ness loses some of ‘its former prominence’, and becomes more constructive and integrative:

A more marginalized, reconstructed ego continues to play an important role in focusing attention on the numinous and orienting the person to both the outer and inner world. ... So, while the ego is removed from its former preeminent position it remains a crucial partner in the dialogue between the ego and the unconscious (2005:174).

Since spiritual experience often has a sense of the numinous, detachment is necessary to counteract the cravings for ‘It-ness’ as well as the ‘I-ness’ of self-interest. Without detachment, the danger of spiritual experience is that it leads to a utilitarian and consumerist mindset (I-It); in contrast to developing otherness and I-Thou<sup>336</sup> relationships. Taylor observed such situations, and therefore states succinctly: ‘it is Him, not It, we want’; or ‘NOT *IT* BUT *HIM*’ (Beauchamp 1890:67). The focus therefore in mystical transformation, as the foregoing sections have demonstrated, is not on experience as an end in itself. Taylor himself was astute in discerning the dangers of spiritual experience, hence the clarification here in relation to detachment. A potential danger, which Auden observes, is that ‘the experience itself [becomes idolized] as the summum bonum’ (1964:18). The negative consequence is that people spend their lives ‘either gloomily regretting its loss’; and, by ‘falling into a state of accidie’, they try to ‘recapture and prolong it’ (1964:18).

Two illustrations from the CIM’s record are indicative of such a negative consequence. Taylor recalls how a missionary sister at the Pearsall Smith meetings in Brighton revelled in the blessing that ‘*she* had got *IT*’; however, after several months, ‘she had lost *IT*’ (Beauchamp 1890:68). Following a prolonged ‘darkness in her soul’, she was restored and testified that ‘*the Blessor: HE* has got *me*,’ which resulted in a lasting blessing (1890:68). In similar vein, a CIM member named Hutton shared of his error on ‘the question of holiness’, where he became so ‘engrossed’ about receiving ‘the blessing’ that he neglected food and sleep (1890:63). After an initial happy experience, he spent three horrible days recovering from ‘congestion of the brain’;

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<sup>336</sup> On Buber’s I-Thou distinction, it suffices to cite three statements for elucidation, namely: ‘I-Thou can only be spoken with the whole being’, while ‘I-It can never be spoken with the whole being’ (1958:3). ‘When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no thing; he has indeed nothing. But he takes his stand in relation’ (1958:4). On spiritual beings in relation to the eternal *Thou*: ‘in each we are aware of a breath from the eternal *Thou*; in each *Thou* we address the eternal *Thou*’ (1958:6).

finally, when the light broke through, he came to the personal realisation that he was a sinner, ‘as I had never seen myself before’; and ‘saw GOD dwelling in pure and unapproachable light’ (1890:64). His solemn lesson highlights the seduction of IT-centred holiness experiences:

it is possible to go wrong even when we are fasting and praying for holiness ... beautiful religious feelings are often deceptive ... now I believe that every blessing must be *in* CHRIST and *only in Him*; and I aim at always being occupied, not with my sacrifice for Him, but with His sacrifice for me (1890:65).

Taylor’s response to these illustrations demonstrate the need to detach from an ego-centred orientation that subsumes facts/truth, insisting that the safeguard is the word of God, which is ‘sharper than any two-edged sword’ (Heb 4:12); it is the testimony and ‘best evidence’ (1890:68-69). Cognisant of the painful consequences of his own struggles and misconceptions, his encouragement to co-workers is not to be anxious about anything,<sup>337</sup> ‘not even about [their] holiness’ (1890:18-19). Furthermore, acknowledging his own failure to trust and abide in Christ, he urges them not to focus on their faith, as it may lead to despondency; rather, to focus on God’s faithfulness and dwell in Christ’s fullness, which does not disappoint. He evidently learned to take ‘God’s truth in spite of feelings’, and to drink deeply of the Holy Spirit; hence his emphasis that ‘[f]act is more important than feeling’ and exhorts the colleagues to build on the facts of ‘what we have and are IN CHRIST’ (1890:68-69).

In expounding Jn 6, Taylor’s overarching point is that Jesus is *the* blessing; and that satisfaction of the soul is derived not from ‘the supply, but the Supplier’; in other words, it is ‘not a question of IT, but of HIM’ (1890:22). It is significant that Taylor shared these insights in Shanxi, which had experienced great famine in 1876-1879. Without denying that the body needs proper nutrition, physical rest, and a proper circulation of ‘taking in’ and ‘giving out’, Taylor’s priority is to nourish one’s soul on the ‘Bread of Life’ and ‘Spiritual Drink’ for all spiritual need (1890:22); not in a strenuous manner, but in the repose of Jesus’ presence:

I believe that before He gives us a full blessing, and takes us up and uses us, He says, "Be at rest in My presence; do not be asking for My *plans*." *Jesus is the great plan*; and in the presence of JESUS CHRIST, no matter how large the need is, lie down and rest (1890:22-23).<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> The poem ‘God’s Ordering’ (by F. Ellis, undated) served as a reassurance to the CIM missionaries to follow God’s perfect way, wisdom, power in glad submission and with full courage, without denying one’s weakness and need (Beauchamp 1890:53).

<sup>338</sup> For a theological discussion on union with Christ in relation to the discourse on Jesus the Bread of Life (Jn 6:32-35, 48-58), Peterson (2015:55, 71-72) discusses the implications of ‘eating’ and ‘feeding on’ Christ, of ingesting him, by faith, so that he becomes a part of us, even as food becomes a part of us.

Detachment through letting go also confronts the deception of quick fixes and shortcuts, as they impact negatively on character development over the long haul of missionary life, and mitigate against the slow inner process of *transegoic* integration.<sup>339</sup> This is significant since missionary service is inherently an ‘education for the missionary’, not only ‘a blessing for the heathen’ (Taylor, *The Introduction*, in Guinness [1892]/1977:xii). It follows that regarding the study of the bible, Taylor urged his audience to ‘be learners, and keep in the learners’ class our ‘whole life long’ (Dorsey 2006:184). In adopting a long-term view of missions and a psycho-spiritual developmental approach, short cuts and quick fixes are counter-productive in cross cultural missions. A case in point is the erroneous mindset of three new CIM missionaries in 1885 in their initial phase of language learning;<sup>340</sup> they came to the realisation that seeking ‘the Pentecostal gift of xenolalic Mandarin’ (Goodwin 2010:25) was no substitute for the graft and discipline of language study. Taylor evidently did not approve of ‘extreme views on miraculous language acquisition’, which he felt would not benefit the proclamation of the Gospel among local people; in fact, he later instructed new missionaries as follows: ‘If I could put the Chinese language into your brains by one wave of the hand I would not do it’ (2010:25). Interaction with a local language teacher afforded them valuable opportunities to learn language, as well as ‘culture and idiom’ (2010:25). Detachment therefore is not avoidance of personal responsibility and group accountability; on the contrary, the CIM’s contextualisation and incarnational principles were intended for ‘heart-contact’ with the Chinese, of ‘getting to know them, getting to be one with them, getting into sympathy with them’ (Beauchamp 1890:106-109). Thus, through letting go of ‘I-ness’ and ‘It-ness’, the fruit born of abiding in Christ is love; and, by implication, of living in union and communion with others.

Since missionary spirituality is characterised by living the tension of the opposites (Bosch 1979:15), not by a ‘nice’ balance between being and doing, contemplation and action, evangelism and social justice, etc., detachment from ideals of perfectionism or a ‘perfect equilibrium’ is required. Missionary spirituality is therefore characterised by abiding in Christ,

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<sup>339</sup> Seeking spiritual quick fixes and supernatural short cuts is similar to the danger of seeking religious experience; unless they are acknowledged as ‘totally unmerited blessings’, they ‘can lead a person to the Light’, if the person subsequently feels obligated, through gratitude and grace, to produce good works (Auden 1964:13). However, without deep humility and healthy detachment, the potential effect could be addictive and destructive: But if he allows himself either to regard the experience as a sign of superior merit, natural or supernatural, or to idolize it as something he cannot live without, then it can only lead him into darkness and destruction (1964:13).

<sup>340</sup> The case refers to Studd and the Polhill-Turner brothers, part of the CIM’s ‘Cambridge Seven’ who arrived in China in 1885 (Chang *et al.* 2005:76).

not by a striving for perfection, fruit, results, etc., as evident in Taylor's address at Moody's student conference in North America, in 1888:<sup>341</sup>

Don't imagine that abiding in Christ is a question of a little more or a little less – of being a little more perfect or a little less perfect. "Apart from Me you can do nothing." You can do any amount of work, but you can bear no fruit. Fruit-bearing is the result of abiding in Christ (Dorsey 2006:190).

According to Wigram, the tension between striving and abiding was not resolved for Taylor; rather, it was 'a mark of his spirituality' (2007:113). The rationale is that though the rest of faith enabled him to cope with the trials in his second half of life, and formed 'the basis for his extraordinary spiritual equanimity', the tension remained, as 'the continual activist thrust towards an outward result from inner abiding' was integral to fruitfulness in mission (2007:113). Soul rest therefore does not suggest idleness or inertia, but of living more consciously and fully with the tension of the opposites; of finding rest in God in the midst of activity through abiding in Christ and trusting the Spirit to bring forth fruit at the appropriate time. This involves a letting go of misplaced striving caused by one's ego, agenda, perfectionism, performance, sense of responsibility, wilfulness, insecurity, negative feelings, misconceptions, etc. In this sense, Taylor's mystical transformation represented a shift from 'I-ness' (his work *for* God), to the realisation that 'the Lord's work is not our work for the LORD, but the LORD's own work through us and others' (Beauchamp 1890:105).

Detachment from self-interest also involves commitment to and willingness to suffer for a higher cause than oneself. For Taylor, the immensity of evangelising the world's most populous nation required total commitment; moreover, it involved courage in defying both Victorian culture and Western imperialism (Kane 1994:199-200). On the downside, Doyle asserts that in some respects, the precedent set by the over-emphasis upon 'God's work', to a relative neglect of the family, caused undue suffering, loneliness and emotional dryness to many wives and children; thus, Taylor 'did not set a good example' by pushing himself too hard (2015b:119-120). Yet, motivated by love for God and China, the pouring out of himself was undergirded by a firm conviction that missionary life 'must be one of visible self-sacrifice'

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<sup>341</sup> In July 1888, Taylor spoke at D. L. Moody's Northfield student conference, and at Niagara-on-the-Lake (Chang *et al.* 2005:90). He was accompanied by his son Howard, also a medical doctor, who became a medical missionary in Henan (2005:90, 95, 97). Taylor's first visit to North America inspired 40 young North Americans to apply to the CIM; followed by the departure of 'the American *Lammermuir* Party' from Toronto on September 25, 1888, comprising 14 new workers (2005:90). In 1889, on Taylor's second visit, the North American Council was established in Toronto; and, by the end of 1893, in a space of 5 years, a total of 39 missionaries had been sent out from North America (2005:90).

(Beauchamp 1890:41).<sup>342</sup> By willingly embracing suffering in ‘the now’, as an inlet and experience of ‘the not yet’, his was not a spirituality of suffering *per se*. Rather, in light of Taylor’s teaching on the resurrection, he considered it a ‘privilege now, by faith, to see the Lord Jesus’, asserting that ‘spiritual transformation takes place *now* in measure’; therefore the preparation for the bride of Christ is ‘a real transformation of spirit now’ (Dorsey 2006:242). In the final analysis, Taylor’s journey ‘*from holy striving to wholly abiding*’ is underscored by his view of the transforming power of Christ through the Holy Spirit:

Oh, may God grant that this blessed transformation may ever be going on, for it is a process to be carried on by the Holy Spirit! And this progressive sanctification will be obtained, not by struggle, not by effort of our own, but by beholding, by admiring, by delighting in our Master; and thus all consciously shall we reflect Him! Oh, how wonderful the transforming power of the Lord Jesus Christ! (2006:243).<sup>343</sup>

#### 4.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to explore the Exchanged Life as Taylor’s mystical transformation, which effected an *experience of soul rest* and generated his characteristic theme of *abiding* in his second half of life. Dated September 4, 1869, the Exchanged Life has been posited as a mid-life transformation as well as the apex of Taylor’s spiritual journey. By employing the mystical-transformative paradigm tested in Chapter 3, Taylor’s transformation ‘*from holy striving to wholly abiding*’ has been informed by both mystical insights and psycho-spiritual input. Furthermore, located within a three-decade historical framework (1868-1900), his *transegoic* phase has been embroidered with crucial details from his personal narrative, key writings from his second half of life, and the external factors which impacted on the CIM.

With *abiding* as the hermeneutical key in this chapter, resonances between the beloved’s transformative journey in Chapter 3 (‘*from unrest to soul rest*’) and Taylor’s journey (‘*from holy striving to wholly abiding*’) were evident. In both chapters, the divine-human dynamics have been emphasised, where grace (through the Holy Spirit) is the primary agent from beginning to end; and the person is a dialogical partner, cooperating with grace through prayerful attention, and responding to the invitations of God. On this supposition, mystical is not synonymous with ‘magical’ or ‘esoteric’. Though Taylor’s experiences had numinous elements (a felt sense of the presence of God), his humanity and individuality were fully

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<sup>342</sup> Given the dire need of the famine in China, Jennie Taylor, an experienced CIM woman missionary by then, arrived in Shanxi in June 1878; she supervised the famine relief efforts with the assistance of two younger women missionaries. Jennie left her two toddlers in England under the care of Amelia Broomhall, Taylor’s sister, and only returned two and a half years later to be reunited with her children (Griffiths 2004:73).

<sup>343</sup> This extract is from Taylor’s address at the Mildmay Conference, 1893 (Dorsey 2006:239-245).

engaged. In light of this clarification, eight corollaries below capture in nuce the factors that facilitated Taylor's transformation; furthermore, in keeping with his emphases on the present tense ('now') and the present continuous ('ing'), eight verbs aptly summarise his process, namely: *writing, sharing, listening, leaning, receiving, drinking, enjoying, and detaching*.

First, in Taylor's *disposition of unrest, writing was cathartic*. Taylor's experiences during the tumultuous period of 1868-1869, and the descriptions of his inner unrest, are set within the complex British-Chinese political tensions of the Yangzhou Riot. Evidently lacking in stillness, interiorly and exteriorly, the striking feature is that he found time, amid buffeting storms, to pen his experiences (akin to spiritual journaling). From the tone of his letters, writing served as more than a dissemination of information; it was cathartic, as the expressions were rough and ready, transparent and affectionate, raw and real. His letters are rich in personal admissions and confessions, summing up the primary cause of his unrest as internal, namely: negative feelings and depressive moods; travelling extensively to help others in spite of illness; insufficient rest and physical exhaustion; and vacillating between hope and near despair, which led to a spiritual crisis. Taylor was perceived though as gentle, forbearing, humble, prayerful, and never flagging in zeal. His writing is like a prism, refracting light on various aspects of his humanity and spirituality, notably: a giftedness in articulating deep feelings; a capacity for self-reflection and self-knowledge; vulnerability with loved ones and transparency before God; truthful requests for prayer and companionship; an immense capacity to love and be loved; etc. Taylor's meticulous record-keeping of personal experiences, especially the vagaries of missionary life, has left a treasure trove of spiritual wisdom; thus making it possible for an authentic elucidation of his personal transformation, which this chapter has undertaken.

Second, despite the intense political upheaval and low financial resources, the *desire for holiness* became a collective yearning for the CIM, which encouraged Taylor in his trustful *sharing with soul companions*. As expressed in the language of the Exchanged Life, this desire for holiness included more spiritual empowerment, victory over sin, etc. By tracing the connection between Taylor's childhood (*preegoic* phase) and his mid-life and beyond (*transegoic* phase), it became evident that his personal desire for holiness was embedded in his pietistic Wesleyan/Methodist upbringing. Since the CIM's collective yearning was influenced by holiness articles, including the booklet *How to Live on Christ*, typical terms such as the Exchanged Life, union with Christ, the rest of faith, etc. have been briefly explored within the context of the Holiness movement and Keswick teaching. Another key factor relating to Taylor's openness in sharing with others is the significant role of John McCarthy, a CIM coworker. In reading the book entitled *Christ is All*, which he had borrowed from Taylor, the

realisation dawned on him that the path to holiness and happiness was not through continual striving, but through abiding in Christ, who is the way of holiness. McCarthy's letter described it as a 'new, yet not new' discovery, which became an important catalyst in Taylor's preparation for a transformative encounter with God.

Third, in the *discernment of sin and neglect, listening to the deeper self* is vital for the healing process. Taylor discerned his besetting sin as 'irritability of temper', intensified by a lack of faith, unbelief, and guilt; even frequent states of depression. Given his sensitive nature, the incongruence between his belief and praxis was a painful experience. Moreover, the adverse effects of activism and his own perfectionism caused him to be hard on himself, resulting in self-judgment and self-hatred. His sense of powerlessness and near despair, however, as expressed in letters to his confidants (notably, his mother and sister in England), also became agonising appeals for prayer. Employing psycho-spiritual insights, this chapter has elucidated Taylor's need to listen to his deeper self; and through a growth in self-knowledge, to face his shadow. Precisely because of his extraordinary generosity in caring for others at the expense of himself and his family, insights have been drawn on care of soul as a vital personal responsibility in missionary spirituality.

Fourth, in *desolation through weakness, leaning on the divine Beloved and on loving human support* was a critical factor in Taylor's survival; in particular, the loving presence of his wife Maria provided a safe container in times of spiritual crisis and emotional turmoil. In the CIM's collective desire for holiness, she was a reference point of a holy, Christ-like character – and an exemplar of soul rest to her husband. Maria acknowledged that she knew both his 'failures' and 'conquests'; in similar vein, several contemporary authors highlight the fact that Taylor's greatest strength was also his greatest weakness. In reaching breaking point – a time of deep spiritual need – feeling defeated and pondering whether he should retire from ministry in China, the in-breaking of God through John 4 became a watershed moment. In Taylor's receptive reading of John 4, the text awakened him and penetrated his soul, as though for the first time, inviting him to 'living water' as a present reality, not as 'ancient history'. The divine invitation transmuted into a powerful release of energy at the kairos moment, convincing Taylor that he need *never* thirst again; thus releasing him from doubt and defeat. This time of desolation also reinforced his need of a Saviour, which became a favourite theme in his preaching to the Chinese; moreover, God blessed and owned his ministry in an unprecedented way from that day onward, thereby demonstrating that human weakness is perfected by God's power – indeed a mark of Taylor's spirituality.

Fifth, in the *delight of soul rest, receiving the flow of grace* effected a ‘birth of consciousness’. Since John 15 was a favourite chapter since Taylor’s conversion at the age of 17, its revelatory role at this mid-life point has been described in terms of retrieving the hidden treasures from his unconscious. Consequently, the birth of consciousness clarified three of his misconceptions. First, Jesus was not only the ‘root’ but the ‘whole vine’, and the ‘true vine’. Second, instead of trying to draw the sap *out* of the vine in order to get it *into* himself, the secret was to recognise that Jesus is the (whole) Vine, and to receive the life that flowed from the Vine – a wonder that exceeded his desire and imagination. Third, by reading John 6 and John 15 in his Greek Testament, he was awakened to the meaning of ‘abide’ and ‘remain’ because of the indwelling of Christ (‘Abide in me and I in you). This profound shift to a more receptive disposition (of soul rest), or receiving the flow of grace, captures the essence of Taylor’s mystical transformation, which has been elucidated as a journey *from holy striving to wholly abiding*.

Sixth, in *darkness through suffering, drinking of the living water* became a continuous habit of soul. The darkness that preceded his mystical encounter illustrates that suffering and trials serve to validate the authenticity of mystical transformation. The encounter evidently prepared Taylor for deeper darkness; notably, the death of Maria in July 1870, and the Tientsin massacres, marking 1870 as the hardest and most difficult year in the CIM’s history (prior to 1900, and the tragedies of the Boxer Rebellion). During this period, Taylor’s spiritual thirst is most pronounced; and, through the gracious filling of his empty cup with the near presence of God, Taylor came to suggest drinking of the living water as a continuous habit of soul. The darkness of grief and loneliness lifted with a budding romance on the ship to England, when he and Jennie Faulding, a CIM missionary and close friend to the Taylors in Hangzhou, returned for rest and recuperation. Their marriage, soul companionship, and mission partnership brought immeasurable blessing to the CIM and to their ministries in China, till her death in Switzerland in 1904.

Seventh, in the *dignity of wholly abiding*, the key is *enjoying the ‘privilege’ and ‘blessing’ of abiding*, as both an invitation and an imperative. Taylor encapsulates abiding as ‘being one’ with Christ, and of resting in that union, in contrast to his previous misconceptions of needing to be strong, to climb a pole like an athlete, and to consciously realise God’s presence through intentional efforts. Hence, his realization of a more contemplative disposition, a growing adult consciousness, and a more integrative spirituality. The implications of the true Vine for Taylor’s *transegoic* integration have been delineated as reclaiming his true nature in Christ (dignity); enjoying being himself-in-Christ (integrity);

resting in the privilege and blessing of abiding in Christ (intimacy); and rejoicing in habitual union and communion with the indwelling Christ (mutuality). A later sermon on abiding is noteworthy, as it demonstrates the adult consciousness/childlikeness paradox. Having previously thought that abiding required strength, he suggests that we need to be ‘weak enough to abide’, as ‘a babe on its mother’s breast’. In this effortlessness, God performs God’s work and produces the necessary fruit in and through the person.

Eighth, in the final section *detachment through letting go*, ‘Not I, but Christ’ is manifested as an habitual *detaching from ‘It-ness’ and ‘I-ness’*; in particular, the craving for spiritual consolations as a panacea for difficulties and challenges, and the temptation of short cuts and quick fixes that mitigate against discipline and perseverance in the long long-haul of missionary life. Taylor addressed these attitudes of ‘It’, as they focus on the means and the methods, rather than on God. Moreover, an I-It mindset impedes the development of I-Thou relationships and thwarts oneness and ‘heart-contact’ with people, which Taylor believed was necessary for ministry among Chinese people.

In summation, the exploration of Taylor’s transformative journey from *‘holy striving to wholly abiding’* has demonstrated that living the tension of the opposites is a mark of missionary spirituality. Similarly, the daily dying and rising in Christ (the paschal mystery) is ‘a mystery to be lived, not a problem to be solved’; hence, achieving perfect equilibrium or a nice balance is not a gauge of a vital spirituality, nor a goal. Rather, as Taylor’s mystical transformation has evinced, the way of weakness and the way of suffering became inlets for the transforming power of Christ *now*. From deep despair and breaking point, to resting and abiding in the indwelling presence of God, Taylor learned to cease striving interiorly for that which grace alone bestows. Though the challenges and responsibilities of mission increased, ministry became ever more gratifying because he recognised it was God’s work, not his.

The birthing of Taylor’s characteristic theme of restful abiding in Christ (in Zhenjiang, 1869) is thus a profound testament to the mystical transformation that occurred during his immensely challenging and difficult early years as director of the fledgling CIM. In the following two decades, he developed this theme through ‘union and communion’ with Christ, which he also articulated as ‘sacred intimacy’ between the bride and Bridegroom (as a series in *China’s Millions*, 1891-1892, prior to the publication of *Union and Communion* in 1894). Based on this rationale, the mystical resonances and intertextual link between the Fourth Gospel and the Song of Songs are essential to Taylor’s spiritual legacy of abiding in Christ.

## Chapter 5

### MISSIONARY VOCATION AS MYSTICAL PATH (The Creative Constructive Phase)

#### 5.1 Introduction

This third and final stage of the hermeneutical phase, termed the *creative-constructive phase*, explores Taylor's missionary vocation as a *mystical path* (with particular reference to the apostle Paul as exemplar of both mystic and missionary). An understanding of Taylor's mystical path builds on the previous exploration of his *mystical text* (*Union and Communion*, based on the Song of Songs), and his *mystical transformation* (the Exchanged Life, in relation to John's Gospel).

The methodological approach to be employed in this chapter is the construction of a heuristic paradigm that will be framed within a 56-year span, from Taylors' call and consecration in 1849 (Barnsley, Yorkshire), to his death in 1905 (Changsha, Hunan). As a starting point, his consecration effected a willingness to place his whole life 'upon the altar' in missionary service (Taylor [1894a]/2010:9). Posthumously, Taylor was regarded as 'one of God's best gifts to humanity', which 'has been of immeasurable value, not to China only, but in as real a sense to the Church of Christ in all lands' (Broomhall 1905:25).<sup>344</sup>

Within this 56-year timeframe, the purpose of the paradigm is to elucidate Taylor's missionary vocation as a deepening transformative process '*from a living sacrifice to a loving sacrament*', based on four key characteristics identified in his missionary spirituality, namely: *faith, hope, love, and grace*. These will be treated as mystical elements in this chapter, and will not be examined within the context of Paul's canticle (1 Corinthians 13); instead, the focus is on the in-working of God in Taylor's soul (hence the term '*soul work*'), as well as on Taylor's particular embodiment in mission praxis (encapsulated as the '*embodiment of soul work*').<sup>345</sup> Moreover, based on Paul's reference (Phil 2:13, NIV), that 'God is at work in you ... for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose', a four-fold paradigm will explore this inward-outward movement of God, as follows: first, the soul work of faith (embodiment of *askesis*); second, the soul work of hope (embodiment of *kenosis*); third,

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<sup>344</sup> This fitting tribute is from an extract by Alfred S. Dyer, whom Benjamin Broomhall refers to as 'an esteemed member of the Society of Friends' (Broomhall 1905:25). The moral reformer and evangelical Quaker Alfred Stace Dyer (1849-1926), was also a member of the Anglo-Oriental Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade; viewed at: [http://www.hymntime.com/tch/bio/d/y/e/dyer\\_as.htm](http://www.hymntime.com/tch/bio/d/y/e/dyer_as.htm)

<sup>345</sup> It is beyond the scope of this chapter to elucidate the wider impact of Taylor's missionary spirituality on the 'faith missions' movement (Bacon 1984), and on the history of the Chinese Church and Protestant Missions (Latourette [1929]/2009), among others.

the soul work of love (embodiment of *theosis*); and fourth, the soul work of grace (embodiment of *epektasis*). In light of the foregoing introduction, the working question to be addressed is captured as follows: ‘*What was Taylor’s particular embodiment of the mystical elements of faith, hope, love and grace, which would suggest that his missionary vocation is intrinsically a mystical path?*’

## 5.2 Criteria for interpreting the missionary vocation as a mystical path

### 5.2.1 *The apostle Paul’s influence on Taylor*

Taylor approached ‘*every practical question in connection with CHRIST*’ (Beauchamp 1890:107); thus, his model for missionary service was based on the Incarnation of Christ. Furthermore, he emphasised that Christ was not only Saviour, but also the ‘*Pattern*’ for the CIM’s service (1890:43). Since Paul is an example of one who followed and glorified Christ, Taylor also made several references to Paul as a missionary model (1890:31-53), which are summarised at this point.<sup>346</sup> First, the pattern of Christ was the crux of Paul’s preaching, pointing to the One who became poor for our sakes; who was despised alike by Jews and Gentiles; who shed his blood and gave *Himself* for his people, etc. (1890:31). Second, Paul’s life and apostleship were authenticated by his word (1890:31). Third, his character was ‘in harmony with his message’; and because he walked with God, and commended himself to God, his life ‘was thoroughly consistent’ in manifesting, speaking, and living the truth (1890:33). Fourth, his personal embodiment spoke volumes, thus ‘it was not hard to receive *that* message from *that* man’ (1890:31). Finally, Paul’s wisdom was not only taught but caught, precisely because his life ‘was a very public one’, which was invested to the utmost in living *among the people* and engaging in worthwhile ‘self-denying work’ (1890:35).

Pierson, who was prominent in the Keswick movement, refers to Taylor as ‘Paul the Little’ (Broomhall 1905:65), asserting that his ‘wisdom upon practical matters pertaining to the spiritual life [was] not easily equaled’ (1905:67). Moreover, he lauds Taylor’s ‘sagacity and insight’, and giftedness as a writer, suggesting that his ‘proverbial utterances ... deserve to be embalmed in the literature of the century’ (1905:74).<sup>347</sup> Pierson pays tribute to Taylor for

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<sup>346</sup> Taylor’s key biblical texts at the CIM conference in Shanxi on July 8 and 9, 1886, were Acts 16 and 1 Thess 1; however, his talks were suffused with Pauline motifs from the following references: 2 Cor 8:9; Phil 3:8; 2 Cor 4:1-2; Acts 2:27; Acts 20:18-35; 1 Thess 1:1-10; Phil 2:17; Phil 1:12; Acts 1:4-5; Phil 2:6-7; 1 Cor 2:9-10; Phil 1:14; Acts 15:25; Acts 2:22; Phil 4:19; Colossians 1 (Beauchamp 1890:31-53).

<sup>347</sup> *Hudson Taylor’s Legacy: A Series of Meditations* (Broomhall 1931) might have been a response to Pierson’s comment (cf. 2.4.1 for a review of Broomhall’s work).

tuning his life instruments ‘in order to ensure that life should be one harmonious anthem of devotion to God’ (1905:67). This is adapted from the following maxim by Taylor on morning devotions: ‘Do not have your concert first, and then tune your instruments afterwards. Begin the day with the Word of God and prayer, and get first of all into harmony with Him’ (1905:75).

Wigram comments that Paul was ‘a favourite’ for Taylor; and given his ‘immediate hermeneutic’, he found in biblical characters parallels with contemporary spiritual experience. (2007:97). To know Christ and the power of his resurrection (Phil 3:10-11) was ‘an important foundation for Paul’s expression of his spirituality’, which Taylor interpreted and enjoyed as ‘a present reality’ (2007:97). However, regarding the subject of self-supporting local churches in Taylor’s thinking and strategy, Wigram critiques Taylor’s lack of adequate reflection on Paul’s ecclesiology (2007:97, 241).<sup>348</sup> So, on the other hand, affirms the influence of Pauline theology on Taylor’s missionary strategy (2016:73-74), highlighting the paradox of his lived experiences (2 Cor 4:7-15), where ‘tribulation and weakness’ were met with ‘triumph and inner strength’ (So 2016:65). Tucker’s assessment is remarkable, which compares Taylor’s mission vision with Paul’s, as follows:

No other missionary in the nineteen centuries since the apostle Paul has had a wider vision and has carried out a more systematized plan of evangelizing a broad geographical area than Hudson Taylor (1983:173).

### 5.2.2 *Paul’s model of missionary spirituality*

Reilly (1978:45) cites Paul for a unifying direction in history, in his discussion on ‘a spirituality for mission and a spirituality suited to Christians engaged in mission’:

The Mission of God determines the mission of the Church. The goal of the *missio Dei* is the establishment of God’s *shalom* in the kingdom. For the Christian this is the final meaning of history. In Pauline language, God’s plan and mission is to unify all things in himself through Christ (1978:161).

In a more thorough approach to Paul’s missionary spirituality, Bosch suggests that Second Corinthians is ‘by any standards, the best case study in missionary spirituality that has ever been published’ (1979:13). Given its dominant theme of ‘the search for true Christian missionary spirituality’, the marks are ‘the intensely personal character of this letter’ (1979:25), Paul’s ‘personal involvement’ in ministry (1979:43), and the ‘personal embodiment’ of his message. The following connection between the metaphor of ‘branch’ (John 15) and missionaries as ‘ambassadors’ is therefore characteristic of Paul’s missionary spirituality:

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<sup>348</sup> As mentioned in the Literature Review (footnote #122), Wigram (2007:241) compares Taylor’s thinking on this subject with Allen’s *Missionary Methods: St Paul’s or Ours?* (1962:12).

In no New Testament writing ... is the emphasis on the personal involvement of the Christian as a *part* of the message he proclaims so clearly evident as in 2 Corinthians. Paul's version of the branch metaphor is to call himself and his co-workers "Christ's ambassadors" (5:20). The ambassador is more than just an instrument ... [or a diplomatic mailbag] ... He is a personal representative of his government, the very embodiment of the one who sends him (1979:43).

Bosch describes Paul's spirituality as 'not a spirituality of the monastery but of the road' (1979:20), as it was continually transformed through his engagement in the world. Since 'involvement in this world should lead to a deepening of our relationship with and dependence on God' (1979:13), Paul's spirituality was 'never a kind of permanent attribute, a possession or achievement; it was renewed again and again from within' (1979:20).

On the often-dichotomous view between contemplation and action, Bosch asserts that spirituality 'is not contemplation over action'; in other words, it is 'not a flight from the world over against involvement in the world' (1979:13). The two ought to be held in tension rather than trying to achieving a 'nice balance' or of establishing 'an equilibrium'; he therefore suggests 'the cross'<sup>349</sup> as a model that combines these tensions and other dualistic models:

The cross is, in one sense, a sign of total identification with the world: Jesus was never more worldly than on the cross. In another sense it is a sign of radical separation from the world: Jesus never stood over against the world more clearly than here. And spirituality is both of these at the same time' (1979:15-16).<sup>350</sup>

Since Bosch does not adequately explore contemplation and action as one, he does not discuss a mystical emphasis *per se*. However, recent mission scholarship is paying attention to the topic. For example, Laugerad comments that contemplation and mission are 'central and indivisible concepts within the intra-Trinitarian relation' (2008:132); and, with reference to Jesus' allusion in John 5:19, suggests that 'mission spirituality must rediscover the beat of the pulse of the mystical theology' (2008:132).<sup>351</sup>

Contemplation is to *behold*, to *see*. The Son beholds the Father, and the Father sends the Son and the Spirit. *Within this intra-Trinitarian union of contemplation and mission lies the foundation to all creation* (2008:132).

Since the Triune God is 'constantly seeking fellowship with us humans, through interior and exterior means' (2008:129), Karecki writes of the invitation to intimacy with the Trinity that

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<sup>349</sup> Bosch's work (1979), published four decades ago, is now enriched by topics such as 'cruciformity' (Gorman 2001; 2009), which will be elaborated in this chapter.

<sup>350</sup> The cross is also an important symbol in counteracting hagiographical perceptions of missionaries as heroes and 'spiritual giants', and the temptations that Jesus faced to be 'a popular Messiah' (Bosch 1979:17-20, 32).

<sup>351</sup> *The Renewal of Mystical Theology*, edited by McGinn (2017), covers 'Historical Perspectives on Mystical Theology' (2017:3-176), and 'Contemporary Issues in Mystical Theology' (2017:179-274).

‘is open to all of us’ (2012:25).<sup>352</sup> This intimacy is foundational to being with God in God’s movement in the world, being one with God in God’s agenda, and being in communion/community with others (2012:25). Karecki asserts further that ‘contemplative encounter’ is a vital aspect of missionary spirituality because it is ‘in essence the kind of transformative experience that makes us ready for every human encounter’ (2009:25).

### 5.2.3 *Paul’s theme of union with Christ*

The Pauline theme of union with Christ ‘has risen to prominence in the current world of New Testament scholarship’, which is attributed to ‘the fruit of labours over more than a century’ (Campbell 2012:31).<sup>353</sup> In the rediscovery of this theme within Reformed Protestant circles, Campbell suggests that the topic of union with Christ ‘may function as a route back to an understanding of Paul (or certain elements of him, at least) that has remained elusive for a time’ (2012:441). In terms of the way forward, ‘if union with Christ has been neglected, it ought to be recovered, since a faithful understanding of Paul is impossible without it’ (2012:443).

Union with Christ was vital to Paul’s thought, which ‘is directly addressed in approximately thirty-two instances in Paul’s letters’ (2012:441). Worth noting is Campbell’s comment on Paul’s metaphor of marriage for nuptial union between Christ and the church:<sup>354</sup> it is ‘one of the most profound and informative ways in which he depicts union with Christ. He presses the metaphor for details in a way that is rarely seen with other metaphors ... ‘ (2012:309). Campbell employs the ‘metaphor of a web’ to explicate ‘union with Christ [as] the webbing that holds it all together’ (2012:441-442), based on the view that union with Christ is an interconnecting term, ‘the ingredient that binds all other elements together’, and ‘[e]very Pauline theme and pastoral concern’ ultimately coheres with the whole through [this] common bond’ (2012:441-442). Since one single definition is inadequate, he delineates four umbrella terms for describing union with Christ, namely: ‘union, participation, identification, incorporation’ (2012:29, 30, 406-420). Campbell also argues that union with Christ is ‘not the centre of [Paul’s] thought’; rather, the ‘great concern’ is ‘the glory of God in Christ’ (2012:441-442). Nevertheless, it is ‘indispensable’, and ‘possibly should be regarded as a key to rediscover the richness and vitality of Paul’s theology’ (2012:441-442). In defining Pauline mysticism,

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<sup>352</sup> Taylor also placed a strong emphasis on the Trinity; notably in ‘Consecration and Blessing’ (Dorsey 2006:166-179).

<sup>353</sup> Campbell provides a helpful survey of contemporary scholarship on the topic of union as well as an overview of key arguments regarding Pauline mysticism (2012:31-58).

<sup>354</sup> Campbell’s exegetical-theological elucidations of Paul’s metaphor of marriage are helpful (2012:298-310).

Campbell encapsulates five related conceptions based on prior scholarship (2012:441), namely: local, relational, eschatological, Trinitarian fellowship, and existential.<sup>355</sup>

#### 5.2.4 *The mysticism of Paul*

Following on from the need for mystical theology in mission, as well as a rediscovery of Paul's theme of union with Christ, another lacuna in Protestant scholarship is the general lack of recognition of Paul as a mystic; hence, a corresponding lack of integration between Paul's mysticism and missionary spirituality. Such a recognition and integration would facilitate the recovery of Taylor as a Protestant mystic cum missionary. Moreover, by positing Paul's 'Christ mysticism' (Kourie 1981, 2009b; Yungblut 1997) as the dynamic pulse of his missionary spirituality, the *raison d'être* for exploring Taylor's missionary vocation as intrinsically a mystical path would be clarified. Regarding 'Protestant opposition to mysticism', McGinn's observation is that it is founded mainly on 'an inadequate view of the mystical element of Christianity, taking it as a monolithic phenomenon based on "mystical union" (*unio mystica*) conceived of as a mingling of God and the human creature' (2016a:4).<sup>356</sup> Kourie's clarification is therefore helpful, that Paul is 'a *communio* mystic'; this means that his mysticism is 'not one of undifferentiated absorption into Christ, but one of living in the reality of spiritual Christ – the reality 'in which the believer now lives' (2009b:241). In fact, by guarding against possible pantheistic interpretations, Paul demonstrates that the person possessed by Christ does 'not cease to be himself' (Stewart 1935:167-168), as follows:

Christian experience does not depersonalize men [sic] and reduce them to a monotonous uniformity: it heightens every individual power they have ... No, it was anything but a blurring and obliterating of personality that resulted from the Damascus experience. Every quality of heart and brain and soul which the man possessed was lifted into a sudden, new distinctness and vigour. This was what union with Christ meant to Paul, and what he believed it could mean to all the world (1935:167-168).

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<sup>355</sup> By way of elaboration, 'local' refers to a spiritual relationship where Paul is 'in Christ, and Christ is in Paul' (Campbell 2012:60). The 'relational' is described as 'the intense feeling of personal and spiritual relationship' that is 'consonant with the nature and work of the Holy Spirit' (2012:60-61). The 'eschatological' view 'connects the believer to the risen Christ, and through him, the anticipation of the new age' (2012:60-61). The 'trinitarian fellowship' connotes the 'nature of our fellowship with Christ [which] stems from the mutual indwelling of Father and Son within the Godhead' (2012:61). The 'existential' model concerns 'solidarity with Christ' in relation to 'the actual experience of the believer, since solidarity means that what Christ experienced becomes part of the "experience" of the believer' (2012:61).

<sup>356</sup> The resurgence of interest on the topic of union with Christ within Protestant scholarship and a rediscovery of the roots of mysticism in the Protestant tradition have been previously noted (cf. 1.1.3; 3.1; and 4.2.4).

For an elucidation of ‘Christ-mysticism’, Stewart (1935:147-203); Yungblut (1997); and Kourie 1981, 2009b) are informative;<sup>357</sup> hence several key points are delineated here. First, since the mystical initiative begins with God and God’s self-revelation, mysticism is a response to the divine initiative, and is always gift, never a human achievement. Moreover, Paul’s emphasis on grace, not on works, accentuates divine revelation rather than spiritual exercises for the soul’s ascent to God:

His mysticism was essentially of the reacting kind. Christ, not Paul, held the initiative. Union with the eternal was not a human achievement: it was the gift of God. It came, not by any spiritual exercises, but by God’s self-revelation, God’s self-impartation (Stewart 1935:164).

Second, the primary concern in Christian mysticism is not exceptional experiences and supernatural phenomena, as ‘such experiences form only a comparatively small part of the soul’s deep communion with God in Christ’ (1935:161-162). For example, Paul’s experience of being ‘caught up to the third heaven’ was an ‘extraordinary event’, a ‘direct experience of the presence of God’ where he was given ‘the beatific vision’; and it was ‘*only one*’ aspect of Paul’s mysticism (1935:161-162). Given Paul’s notion that the soul is ‘hid with Christ in God’, which applies to all people, Paul’s mysticism is also ‘quodidian mysticism’ (Kourie 2009b:242), as it has connotations for the ordinary person and ordinary experience:

it was in the daily, ever-renewed communion, rather than in the transient rapture, that the inmost nature of Christianity lay. This was the true mysticism. This was essential religion. This was eternal life. In some degree, then, *every real Christian is a mystic in the Pauline sense* (Stewart 1935:162).

Third, ‘Paul the *mystic*, not Paul the moralist, or organiser of the early churches, is the revealer of God’s secret wisdom’, according to Kourie’s premise (1981:74).<sup>358</sup> Mystics are ‘paradigms of human authenticity’, often ‘pioneers and trail-blazers, who venture into unknown territory and challenge the status quo of institutional religion’ (Kourie 2009b:238); however, as in the case of Paul the mystic, they also bring out the richness and vitality of spirituality:

... in many cases they are pioneers shedding light on what is hidden and pointing to a passionate encounter with Reality. They witness to the active infusion of Infinite Spirit into finite spirit, or perhaps more accurately, an awakening to the inner actualization of the same (2009b:238).<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Three important chapters by Yungblut (1997) demonstrate the varieties of biblical mysticism, as follows: ‘The Fountainhead: Jesus the Jewish Mystic’ (1997:91-105); ‘The Christ-Mysticism of Paul the Apostle’ (1997:106-127); and ‘The God-Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel’ (1997:128-151).

<sup>358</sup> Kourie presents a succinct overview of the debates surrounding Paul’s mysticism (1981:71-74).

<sup>359</sup> ‘A Mystical Reading of Paul’ (Kourie 2009b:235-245) is especially helpful for a mystical interpretation.

The revelation of God's secret wisdom (the source of illumination for Paul's spiritual wisdom), is expressed in Paul's intensely personal intimacy with God through union with Christ in the Spirit; thus, Stewart contends that union with Christ was 'the heart of Paul's religion' and 'the key which unlocks the secrets of his soul' (1935:147). In the Damascus experience, Paul 'beheld Christ summoning and welcoming him in infinite love into vital unity with Himself', which produced his 'most characteristic sentences' and expressions of 'intense intimacy with Christ';<sup>360</sup> notably (Gal 2:20): "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"; and the phrases "*in Christ*"<sup>361</sup> and "*in the Spirit*" (1935:147, 154, 156).

Fourth, 'the Christophany on the way to Damascus was a decisive event which replaced Paul's mysticism of performance with a mysticism of grace' (Kourie 2009b:241). This mystical interpretation of 'in-Christ', as Kourie elaborates, 'was propagated by Deissman at the turn of the century', who postulates that Paul's emphasis on grace takes prominence over 'justification by faith' (2009b:241). Yungblut's explication of being 'in Christ' (with reference to Gal. 5:24-25) concurs, as follows:

it is not justification by faith which brings about the ethical man; it is the indwelling Christ who produces in him good works. Those who have died and risen again with Christ, in the inner being have entered into a super-earthly world not open to those who strive for law righteousness. Being inwardly liberated from the "natural world", they are ready to embark upon the "supernatural" life. There has been a transformation of the will ... (1997:119).

Fifth, Paul's 'distinctive phrase' of "being-in-Christ" is 'the essence of the mystical experience', according to Yungblut (1997:108), and his 'distinctive emphasis' is 'the experienced reality of this unity *now* .... It is open to believers *now* to enter into the resurrection mode of existence' (1997:113). It is 'the mysticism of Paul that has brought him to this distinctive position' of the present reality of the resurrection motif (1997:116), which enables him to live a fully human life in the present:

Though Paul was altogether rooted in the earth as a good Jew, his aspirations are yet fixed in heaven. Paul never ceases to have the ring of reality as a human being, but because of his Christ-mysticism he attains a larger, higher, freer humanity (1997:121).

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<sup>360</sup> Resonances with the Fourth Gospel are also noted, primarily 'oneness with Christ' (Stewart 1935:151, 156).

<sup>361</sup> On the phrase "in Christ" (or some cognate expression), 'which occurs 164 times in Paul but never in the Synoptics', Stewart credits Deissman's 'thorough examination' of its usage 'in Greek literature in general and in the Septuagint in particular' (1935:155). Kourie (1981:74-75) summarises the mystical interpretation of the phrase "in Christ", as well as mystical transformation "in Christ" which takes place at several levels, namely: baptism, suffering, and 'in the Spirit' (1981:75).

By way of clarification, Paul is both Christocentric and Theocentric, given that in ‘every expression of his intimacy with Jesus stands the great ultimate fact of God Himself’; thus, to be ‘in Christ’ is to be ‘in God’ (Stewart 1935:170-173).<sup>362</sup> ‘In Christ’ is therefore an encompassing term for the unity of the Trinity.

### 5.2.5 *The mystical elements of faith, hope, and grace*

From the mystical perspective of John of the Cross,<sup>363</sup> the three theological virtues (faith, hope, and love) ‘have the function of withdrawing the soul from all that is less than God, they consequently have the mission of joining it with God’ (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:448-449). John’s mystical poetry also demonstrates the ‘sheer grace’ that is experienced as a result of the transformative effects of these virtues in the purgation of the dark night (1991:448-449); hence, the addition of *grace* as a key mystical element in this exploration.<sup>364</sup> In order to highlight the ‘function’ and ‘mission’ of these mystical elements in Taylor’s mystical path, the paradigm will include mystical insights from John of the Cross.

From a missional perspective, Taylor cites Paul’s active example of faith, hope, and love (based on 1 Thess 1), for his teaching on ‘reproductive lives’, as follows: ‘The faith imparted was a working faith, the love a laborious love, the hope a patient hope’ (Beauchamp 1890:36). He emphasises that these qualities of faith, love, and hope were reproduced in Paul’s spiritual children precisely because he ‘lived among the people for their sakes, not for his own;’ and because ‘they knew very well what manner of man he was among them’ (1890:36). Since the fruit of Paul’s life produced a spiritual likeness between Paul the father and his spiritual children, it underscores that faith, hope, love, and grace have reproductive and life-giving effects in missionary spirituality.

### 5.2.6 *The primary image of fruit/fruitfulness*

Taylor expressed the desire that the lives of CIM missionaries be as fruitful and ‘as fully consecrated’ as Paul’s was (1890:39); and believed that they would produce ‘as much spiritual fruit’ as in Paul’s day (1890:39). He assures the missionaries that even though ‘[t]he world, the flesh, and the devil have not altered, GOD has not altered, the blood of CHRIST has not altered at all’ (1890:39). Acknowledging that God is the source of fruitfulness in a missionary’s life,

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<sup>362</sup> Yungblut’s chapter on ‘Christ-Mysticism versus God-Mysticism’ (1997:123-125) discusses learning from Jesus, ‘as from a human brother, the secret of the practice of his own God-mysticism’.

<sup>363</sup> *The Dark Night*, Book Two, Chapter 22, Stanzas 11 and 12 (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:448-449).

<sup>364</sup> John of the Cross’ mystical insights have been previously applied to inform the understanding of Taylor’s mystical text (Chapter 3), and his mystical transformation (Chapter 4).

fruit or fruitfulness is identified as a primary image in Taylor's writings; it is also an important outcome of union and communion with God. In an exposition of Psalm 1, Taylor captures 'a life of union' in relation to the blessing of '*seasonal fruitfulness*', and of communion in the blessing of '*continued vigour*' (Steer 1995:73). He also employs the symbolism of the vine and branches to highlight God's way of working with us, which reflects a contrast between the organic (fruit) and the mechanistic (work):

The figure is not that of water flowing through a channel; but of fruit, the very outcome of our own transformed life -- a life of union with Christ. It is so gracious of God not to work through us in a mechanical way, but to make us branches of the true vine, the very organ by which its fruit is produced ... Work is the outcome of effort; fruit of life (Taylor, in Steer 1995:73).

Similarly, communion is depicted as sustaining and strengthening, or 'continued vigour'. Taylor contends that where a human life is maintained by communion, 'adversity only brings out the strength and reality of the life within' (1995:74). In this context, he cites the 'hardy evergreen' which maintains its leaves even in 'the cold blast of the falling snow', because 'the life within is too strong' (1995:74). The leitmotif of union and communion is therefore best understood in relation to fruit or fruitfulness (rather than work), and by the organic (rather than the mechanistic).<sup>365</sup> In similar vein, the metaphor of the branch requires 'nutritive power' from the trunk and roots, according to Bosch (1979:42); and is therefore more conducive than the mechanistic terms of 'instrument' or 'tool' in describing the role of the missionary:

It has to make all this a part of itself, and allow itself to be affected and renewed and transformed by that power. Only after having assimilated such energy can the branch impart it to the fruit. The branch is, therefore, itself involved in the process of transmitting nourishment (1979:42).

### 5.2.7 *From living sacrifice to loving sacrament*

Another characteristic of Paul's mysticism is his embodiment of the 'self-giving love' of Christ (Kourie 2009b:242), which underscores the motivation and direction of the missionary vocation. By virtue of living among the people and bringing to visibility the self-giving love of God, a living sacrifice becomes a sacramental presence in the world. The notion of a sacrament is also drawn from Paul's reference to becoming 'an aroma' and 'a fragrance of the knowledge of God'; a fragrance that 'rises up to God for His glory', but which also has 'a

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<sup>365</sup> With an emphasis on the Holy Spirit, two statements encapsulate Taylor's references to machinery, as follows: 'We have given too much attention to methods and to machinery and to resources, and too little to the Source of Power – the filling with the Holy Ghost' (Murray 1902:96-98); and, 'I feel that it is divine power we want and not machinery!' (Kan 2003:48-49).

decisive impact on all those who come in touch with it' (Bosch 1979:29). Paul joyfully endorsed his circumstances, and thus the aroma or fragrance arose amid hardship and captivity. Since he 'frequently links the idea of the fragrance of incense with that of sacrifice', the intertwining of these two metaphors in 2 Corinthians 4:7 demonstrates that 'a rejoicing captive is a fragrant sacrifice' (1979:30). Both a living sacrifice and a loving sacrament embody 'quotidian mysticism', which is of immense value to the transcendent purposes of God:

we are not better than pots<sup>366</sup> of earthenware containing an invaluable treasure; like [Paul], we know that the transcendent power which does indeed manifest itself in what we do as missionaries does not come from us, but from God alone (Bosch 1979:24).

By way of clarification, Lam adapts Paul's terminology of 'a living sacrifice' (Rom 12:1) and applies it to the context of the Song of Songs, suggesting that the beloved's vineyard becomes a 'living sacrament' (2012:76-80). The rationale is founded on the vital need to tend 'one's own vineyard' as 'a spiritual practice', in order that one's 'existential project' (spirituality) brings to visibility the divine presence. Given the beloved's holistic embodiment of divine love in the Song of Songs, 'living sacrament' is employed to avoid misconceptions of world-denying ascetic practices often connoted by the word 'sacrifice'. However, cognisance is taken of the fact that sacrifice and sacrament share a 'holy' resonance. The origin of the word sacrifice means to 'make sacred or holy', that is, 'the art of drawing energy from one level and reinvesting it at another level to produce a higher form of consciousness' (Johnson & Ruhl 1999:59). It is 'not giving up something to get something else you want more'; rather, when correctly applied, 'a sacrifice is never life denying; rather, it is always life affirming' (1999:59). Even though suffering is inherent in both a living sacrifice and a living sacrament, Paul's mysticism epitomises that 'in Christ, spiritual fruitfulness is possible even amidst suffering' (Kourie 2009b:242); furthermore, based on Paul's experience (2 Cor 11:23-33), 'human weakness is not an obstacle for God; on the contrary, it provides the ambience for divine activity' (2009b:242).

### 5.2.8 *The mysterium tremendum as mystical paradox*

If a point of convergence between 'a spirituality of the monastery' and a spirituality of a missionary is needed conceptually, the term *mysterium tremendum* is a conducive meeting point, as paradox is characteristic of both mystical consciousness and missionary experience.

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<sup>366</sup> Bosch use of the word 'poets' here (1979:24) might possibly be a typographical error, since he refers later to 'pots' (1979:87).

A detailed discussion of the *mysterium tremendum* is beyond the present scope; suffice it to mention that union with God is not experienced only as bliss, as elucidated in Podmore's elucidation of the '*mysterium horrendum*' (2013:93-116).<sup>367</sup> Rather, it is a lived paradox:

As we become more conscious of this inner world we are both attracted and frightened by it. We are coming closer to ourselves and therefore, to God, experienced by the mystics as '*tremendum et fascinans*', frightening, yet attractive (Hughes 1985:17).

Missionaries would do well to integrate Paul's mysticism and the wisdom of the mystics,<sup>368</sup> as living in 'the *mysterium* we call God' (Perrin 2007:241) is not only a way of ambiguity, paradox, and unknowing; it is also a way of surprise. For Paul, 'the element of surprise' was part of his theology and spirituality, and a development that occurred 'as he moved from surprise to surprise' (Bosch 1979:59). This element of surprise is reflected in the Roman Catholic theologian Ivan Illich's definition of missiology, which Bosch quotes:

The Church is led to marvel about the ever new images in which her venerable knowledge can become meaningful for the first time ... missiology therefore is the study of the Church as surprise (1979:59).

From a psycho-spiritual perspective, including the growth in mystical consciousness, the element of surprise (through new perspectives) is embedded in the embrace of paradox:

Wisdom from the unconscious often suggests an alternative that goes beyond the seeming contradictions of life. It may provide a new perspective or meaning in which the contradiction doesn't entirely go away, but no longer seems important or relevant. To view the elements of life as paradoxical rather than contradictory is to open up a whole new series of possibilities. It is our inability to see a hidden unity that is problematic. To accept paradox is to earn the right to unity (Johnson & Ruhl 1999:75).

Certain contradictions are not eliminated from this earthly life; yet, in Christ, one has a reference point for carrying them in a different way that is no longer enslaved or dominated by the ego. Stated differently, 'Acceptance of one's personal 'crucifixion' epitomizes the summation of a life which consistently seeks to be divested of self, a primary component of the mystical path' (Kourie 1981:77). The paschal mystery is thus an apt symbol for accepting one's 'crucifixion' and experiencing to the death/resurrection motif. Yungblut interprets the 'mystical identification with Christ in his dying and rising' as 'an interior death to sin and rising

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<sup>367</sup> Regarding Rudolf Otto's conceptualisation of the *mysterium tremendum*, Podmore's discussion is insightful (2013:93-116).

<sup>368</sup> *The Way of Paradox* (Smith [1987]/2004) discusses Meister Eckhart's thought, which has particular relevance for Asian spirituality.

to newness of life’; moreover, ‘in practice [it] produces a living ethic’ which becomes ‘life in the Spirit of Christ’ (1997:116-121).

### 5.2.9 *The yin yang symbol as paradox*



The yin-yang symbol is apt for capturing the paradoxical themes of the spiritual life, namely: light and dark; motion and stillness; activity and rest; action and contemplation; feminine and masculine, ‘remaining in, yet flowing out’, etc. (cf. Lam 2012:143).<sup>369</sup> It also symbolises the way of paradox, unity, harmony, integration, the way of the Tao,<sup>370</sup> a unity of heaven and earth, etc. With reference to the traditional yin-yang symbol above, comprising two fish-shaped spheres, the ‘yin’ (black) and ‘yang’ (white)’ are ‘mutually complementary’; the one cannot exist without the other; and are ‘mutually inclusive and relative’ (Yeo 1998:20-21). The small dots in each sphere represent the mutual inclusivity, where ‘[y]in has part of yang, and yang has part of yin; or, yin is in yang and yang is in yin. They are two distinct aspects of the same and one reality’ (1998:20-21).<sup>371</sup>

Integral to the yin-yang philosophy<sup>372</sup> is ‘the process of change’, which is pregnant with existential meaning, as Yeo elucidates:

yin and yang respectively signify rest and movement, being and becoming, responsiveness and creativity, and so forth. Ultimate reality is to be understood in terms of change, rather than merely as a static, deterministic state. It is change that produces ontology, pilgrimage that produces rest, process that produces existence, and suffering that produces perfection. It is change that produces creativity through the process of becoming (1998:98).<sup>373</sup>

Though ‘change and chaos, insecurity and uncertainty are built into the cosmic system and will not be eradicated’ (1998:104-105), intrinsic to the process of change is a *telos*; thus the yin-

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<sup>369</sup> The yin yang symbol also serves as an apt symbol for the paradoxes and transformative motifs in the Song of Songs (Lam 2012:143).

<sup>370</sup> *Christ and the Tao* (Kim 2003) offers contextual (Chinese) insights, which are conducive to innovative and integrative approaches to traditional biblical interpretations.

<sup>371</sup> The yin yang symbol is also important in understanding the practice of *tai chi* and meditation (Liu 1986).

<sup>372</sup> Yeo’s work is an attempt ‘to construct an indigenous theology which hopefully will bridge the gap between the thinking of the biblical worldview and the Chinese yin-yang worldview’ (1998:51). His application of the yin-yang principle/worldview is particularly interesting regarding Genesis and Exodus (1998:51-64), and also Hebrews (1998:65-105).

<sup>373</sup> Yeo (1998:19-20) elaborates that ‘[s]ince change is responsible for the changing world, it is the ultimate reality’, which is also known as *T’ai chi* (or the “Great Ultimate”), and ‘the changing changeless one’.

yang symbol does not infer a nebulous cycle of change without direction, or an endless cycle of ambiguity and unknowing. Along the earthly pilgrimage, change and even chaos are realities; however, these are ‘not to be disliked, manipulated, or feared’ (1998:104-105). The divine invitation is to enter into God’s rest *now*, ‘in the midst of anxiety, ambiguity’, which Yeo discusses in the context of rest in the book of Hebrews:

God’s rest is not only in the future and in heaven; more importantly, it is here and now. ... [We] have a pioneer and perfecter of faith, a leader for the pilgrimage who is pre-existent, the creator and controller of the cosmos. This Jesus has redeemed the pilgrim community by sharing human nature and the conditions of pilgrimage: weakness, perplexity, uncertainty, suffering, and death (1998:104-105).

It is evident that several resonances between Paul’s mysticism and the yin-yang worldview potentially inform missionary spirituality, namely: the reality of paradox; a process of change; ongoing renewal; personal transformation; daily dying and rising with Christ; fruitfulness through suffering and adversity; God’s power is perfected in suffering and weakness; experiencing the resurrection motif and God’s rest as a present reality; etc. Given these resonances, the traditional yin-yang symbol has been adapted to encapsulate the four mystical elements (cf. the four-fold diagram below), and will therefore underpin the next section.



### **5.3 A mystical paradigm for a missionary vocation: ‘from living sacrifice to loving sacrament’**

As previously stated, this section will explore the inner dynamics of *faith, hope, love, and grace* in Taylor’s soul (or inner life), by introducing a quote by John of the Cross in each section in order to highlight the ‘function’ and ‘mission’ of each of these four mystical elements. Moreover, to illustrate the transformative motif of a deepening journey *from a living sacrifice to a loving sacrament*, the paradigm will include pertinent aspects of Taylor’s personal embodiment of these elements, namely: *askesis, kenosis, theosis, epektasis*.

### 5.3.1 *The soul work of faith: the embodiment of askesis*

Faith darkens and empties the intellect of all its natural understanding and thereby prepares it for union with the divine wisdom (*The Dark Night*, in Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:448).

Of what relevance is John's mystical insight to Taylor's faith as a missionary, and in what ways did the Spirit work in him the mystical element of faith, in order to bring him into harmony with divine wisdom? From the perspective of 'natural understanding', Barr comments that Taylor 'could easily have been a millionaire if he had set his mind to it'; and given his 'capacity for taking initiative and inspiring others', he could even have been 'a general, or the founder of a new colony or of a successful industrial empire in his native Yorkshire' (1972:3). However, he 'never once considered any of these possibilities' because 'he was obsessed with a vision' (1972:3). Barr adds that Taylor 'bestrode his faith confidently; it was to him a stallion, immensely strong and resilient; he could go anywhere on it and do anything' (1972:7).

While it is true that Taylor's faith went against the grain of 'natural understanding', it was a learning process through trial and error, toward a 'deepened sense of personal weakness and dependence on the Lord' (Taylor [1894a:]/2010:9).<sup>374</sup> In fact, his parents encouraged him to build his spiritual muscles through solitude and communion with God:

My beloved parents neither discouraged nor encouraged my desire to engage in missionary work. They advised me, with such convictions, to use all the means in my power to develop the resources of body, mind, heart, and soul, and to wait prayerfully upon God, quite willing, should He show me that I was mistaken, to follow His guidance .... ([1894a:]/2010:10).

The overwhelming sense of God's presence was Taylor's inner compass. In his call and consecration at the age of 17. God took possession of his life and effected a 'very practical consciousness'; from then on, God became the centre and the circumference of faith; and this touch of God's presence was essentially the deep soul work that led to an embodiment of faith. Thus, since faith is not merely a theological concept, the 'soul work of faith' is explored in this section as 'the embodiment of *askesis*'.

Waaajman's definition of *askesis* infers 'a deliberate human effort' or 'a deliberate methodical effort of a human being', which touches upon the entire complex of a personal's life and 'all the facets of the spiritual way' (Waaajman 2002:338, 342; also cited in Lam 2016:2). The basic caution in *askesis* as a form of spiritual discipline, a rule of life, or a spiritual

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<sup>374</sup> Or, as Lyall comments, 'faith in God is a solid fact of life; [Taylor's] life was transformed by that living faith which links man's [sic] weakness with God's almighty power' ([1965]/1976:32).

practice, is to ensure that the exercise of faith does not become self-centred, or a form of works to appease God:

In subtle ways, the God of Mystery is eclipsed by religious practices. When God is not the subject and object of faith, the emphasis switches to us – we become the manufacturer of faith, which ends up in our weakening or losing faith (Tam 2007:93).<sup>375</sup>

Rather, as John of the Cross counsels, the function of faith is to empty the intellect of its natural understanding, while its mission is to unite or harmonise it with divine wisdom. Stated differently, *askesis* is a way of emptying a person of faith that is based on works of righteousness, in order to live more freely and consciously within the atmosphere of the *mysterium*, where God is the centre and circumference of one's faith. Though Taylor does not refer to God as 'Mystery', the description of his consecration is evidently mystical. Laying stretched out on the ground, in silence before God, with 'unspeakable awe and unspeakable joy' (Taylor [1894a:]/2010:9), he was infused with a sense of reverence, awe and joy. The consequence of this deep soul work is that he was prepared to be living sacrifice, acutely aware that the call to China might cost his life. Consequently, he knew (cognitively) and felt (intimately) that he belonged to God alone, and that he needed to keep himself free for God's disposal and service ([1894a:]/2010:9). In sum, the life he was to live henceforth would be a life of faith, hope, love *and* grace, which is underscored by Paul's mysticism:

... faith-union means nothing short of being overpowered by Christ. It means the making over of the whole man – thought and feeling and will – to Christ in unconditional surrender. It means an act, and then a life (Stewart 1935:185).

Young and inexperienced, Taylor attempted extreme exercises in faith, not based on a prescribed regimen of spiritual exercises or ascetic disciplines; but rather, from his sense of God's presence, as well as his personal conviction. With a single-eye on China, he experimented through trial and error with radical choices, defying common sense to the detriment of his own health ([1894a:]/2010:9-33). Living frugally at times 'almost exclusively on brown bread and water' ([1894a:]/2010:23), he tested whether he would be able to endure 'self-denying service' ([1894a:]/2010:10). These formative experiences thus shaped his

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<sup>375</sup> Tam's work offers a dialogue between Fowler's faith development theory (seven stages) and the process of spiritual direction; and highlights three essentials of faith, namely: 'universal'; 'knowing'; and 'relational' (2007:95-98). He discusses how faith expands with human maturation, according to Fowler's seven structural stages of faith (2007:101-103), as follows: 'Primal Faith (Infancy)'; 'Intuitive-Projective Faith (Early Childhood)'; 'Mythic-Literal Faith (Childhood and beyond)'; 'Synthetic-Conventional Faith (Adolescence and beyond)'; 'Individuative-Reflective Faith (Young Adulthood and beyond)'; 'Conjunctive Faith (Mid-life and beyond)'; and 'Universalizing Faith (Mid-life and beyond)'.

convictions and consecration: ‘I felt that I could not go to China without having still further developed and tested my power to rest upon His faithfulness’ ([1894a:]/2010:21).<sup>376</sup> This included caring about ‘the welfare of others’ (Taylor & Taylor 1965:8).

The paradoxical connection between God’s faithfulness and a consecrated human life is woven into the fabric of ordinary circumstances; hence the need for the inner soul work of faith that authenticates the *askesis* of faith. A noteworthy experience from Taylor’s young adulthood (1851-1852) is treated here as a ‘contemplative encounter’ given that the soul work had an immediate effect, and also left an indelible impression on his spiritual life. Although the experience was not as pivotal and life changing as the Exchanged Life at mid-life (cf. his mystical transformation elucidated in Chapter 3), it was certainly foundational to Taylor’s future steps of faith:

I cannot tell you how often my mind has recurred to this incident, or all the help it has been to me in circumstances of difficulty in after-life. If we are faithful to God in little things, we shall gain experience and strength that will be helpful to us in the more serious trials of life (Taylor & Taylor 1965:29-32).

The ‘*half-crown*’ encounter<sup>377</sup> occurred during his elementary medical training in Hull, when he visited a destitute Irish Roman Catholic family late one Sunday evening, in an area where he had been previously ‘very roughly handled’ and his ‘tracts were torn to pieces’ on his evangelistic visits (Taylor [1894a]/2010:16). The father of the family requested that Taylor come over to pray for his dying wife, since the priest ‘refused to come without a payment of eighteen pence, which the man did not possess, as the family was starving’ ([1894a]/2010:15). Feeling a little insecure and presumptuous, without a proper enquiry, he ‘reproved the poor man’ for having allowed matters to deteriorate to that ‘wretched’ state, which Taylor describes, as follows:

four of five poor children stood about, their sunken cheeks and temples all telling unmistakably the story of slow starvation; and laying on a wretched pallet was a poor exhausted mother, with a tiny infant thirty-six hour old, moaning rather than crying at her side, for it too seemed spent and failing ([1894a]/2010:16).

Taylor proceeded to bless and assure them that God would provide for their needs, yet holding on to his ‘solitary half-crown’, which was the only money that he possessed, all ‘in one coin’ ([1894a]/2010:15).

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<sup>376</sup> Taylor’s extreme exercises of faith in preparation for China are recorded in the chapter, ‘From Faith to Faith (1851-1852)’ (Taylor & Taylor 1965:21-38). Lyall’s chapter, ‘Faith as a Grain of Mustard Seed’ ([1965]/1976:32-39) offers a brief overview of Taylor’s quality of faith and the role of faith in the CIM policies.

<sup>377</sup> Taylor shared the personal impact of this experience at the CIM conference in China in later years (Taylor [1894a]/2010:14-18; Beauchamp 1890:28). It is also recorded in Taylor & Taylor (1965:29-32).

“Ah!” thought I, “if I had two shillings and a sixpence instead of half-a-crown, how gladly should they have one-and-sixpence of it!” But still a wretched unbelief prevented me from obeying the impulse to relieve their distress at the cost of all I possessed ([1894a]/2010:16).

As he knelt down in prayer for the family and began to utter the Lord’s Prayer, he became convicted of his hypocrisy and mockery of his Heavenly Father. Through an internal struggle in prayer, an unprecedented inner conflict, and ‘in great distress of mind’, it dawned on him that he ‘could trust in God plus one-and-sixpence, but was not prepared to trust Him only, without any money at all in my pocket’ ([1894a]/2010:15-17). Realising that he was ‘comparatively well off’, he slowly drew the half-crown from his pocket and gave it to the family. This response of faith to the prompting of the Spirit had salvific or redemptive purposes, as it stemmed from a genuine conviction and overflowed into a generous act of gratitude:

... in parting with that coin I was giving him my all; what I had been trying to tell him was indeed true – God really was a Father, and might be trusted. The joy all came back in full flood-tide to my heart; I could say anything and feel it then, and the hindrance to blessing was gone – gone, I trust, forever. Not only was the poor woman’s life saved, but I realized that my life was saved too! It might have been a wreck – would have been a wreck probably, as a Christian life – had not grace at that time conquered and the striving of God’s spirit been obeyed. I well remember how that night, as I went home to my lodgings, my heart was as light as my pocket. The lonely, deserted streets resounded with a hymn of praise which I could not restrain. When I took my basin of gruel before retiring, I would not have exchanged it for a prince’s feast ([1894a]/2010:17).

This contemplative encounter is marked by Taylor’s heartfelt response of boundless joy, followed by prayer that was dynamic, playful, grounded, and peaceful. Thus, he reminded the Lord that he had no money for dinner the next day, ‘and with peace within and peace without, I spent a happy, restful night’ ([1894a]/2010:17). The next morning a postman delivered a letter without any explanation; nor could Taylor decipher the handwriting. As he opened the envelope, which contained ‘a sheet of blank paper’ and a pair of kid gloves, a ‘half-a-sovereign’ fell to the ground. Taylor recalls his surprise: “Praise the Lord!” I exclaimed; “400 per cent for twelve hours’ investment; that is good interest” ([1894a]/2010:17).<sup>378</sup>

It is evident from this momentous experience of wrestling with God that Taylor needed to let go of his own sense of security, and abandon himself totally to God, in order to act with

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<sup>378</sup> Taylor had worked for a short period in a bank in Barnsley, and was adept at mathematical and financial calculations; thus he knew the value of money. In the administration of the CIM’s finances, Lyall clarifies that though Taylor believed in simplicity, he also applied efficiency. With proper accounting and annual audits, and conscious of his responsibility to God and to the donors, he adopted a business-like approach to the stewardship of funds ([1965]/1976:36-38).

due compassion and empathy for the distressed. Through this human encounter, he was given a new freedom, peace, and joy; this stood him in good stead for his early years in China when he gave generously to the poor, and God provided supplies and surprises in a timely fashion.

What then are the key lessons that might be gleaned from Taylor's embodiment of *askesis*? This is an important question, as he viewed mission work as a 'spiritual education',<sup>379</sup> for the missionary, for it is on the field that the missionary 'learns as never at home to find CHRIST a living, bright reality' (Taylor, the Foreword, in Guinness [1892]/1977:xii). Taking a cue from Paul's mysticism, faith and love are inseparable, and together they form an important foundation for the embodiment of *askesis*:

... there is faith as a life, the abiding condition of the consecrated soul. Hence faith includes everything that enters into vital personal relationship with Jesus – trusting His guidance, obeying His commandments, praying in His name, giving Him our love ... Faith, as Paul conceives it, *is* love: it is the utter abandonment of self which only an overpowering affection can generate (Stewart 1935:185).

The first lesson is that the inner work of faith-with-love was the impetus for Taylor's self-giving love for Christ and China, which became a focus of his passion, prayer and vision:

If I had a thousand pounds China should have it – if I had a thousand lives, China should have them. No! Not China, but Christ. Can we do too much for Him? Can we do enough for such a precious Saviour? (Chang *et al.* 2005:32)

These words of ultimate affection for Christ and practical love for China were penned to his sister Amelia after he was hospitalised for 'shortness of breath, caused by chronic bronchitis, and ... confined to bed on New Year's Day, 1860' (2005:32). His medical and evangelistic work at the Ningbo Hospital had taken its toll; thus he appealed to his parents to try to influence five young workers for China from the Barnsley Methodist Church (2005:32). In the first five to six years in China, he realised the country's immense spiritual need, yet the workers were far too few.

The second lesson concerns believing prayer and simple trust, which he had learned from childhood, through the prayerful ambience and firm discipline of godly parents:

... from the commencement of my Christian life I was led to feel that the promises were very real, and that prayer was in sober matter of fact transacting business with

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<sup>379</sup> Education was foundational for Taylor; thus 'spiritual education' does not replace other forms of education, such as language study on the field. It is also worth bearing in mind Taylor's personal preparation for China, over and above his elementary medical training in Hull and London (Taylor & Taylor 1965:21-51). It included readings on China and medical missions (Taylor [1894a]/2010:10-11); basic studies in Chinese and Greek (Taylor & Taylor 1965:12-20); keeping abreast with reports on the Taiping Rebellion and the opium trade (1965:47-48), as well as the work of Gutzlaff and William Burns in China (Wigram 2007:72-76); etc.

God, whether on one's own behalf or on behalf of those for whom one sought His blessing ([1894a]/2010:7-8).

As the work of the CIM progressed, Taylor's famous maxim emerged with regard to prayer for God's provision of workers, and with the assurance that God would supply for their every need: 'Depend upon it; God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supplies' (Chang *et al.* 2005:183).<sup>380</sup> The CIM's financial policies were evidently rooted in the utter faithfulness of God, bathed in prayer, and embodied as dependence on God alone:

We must move men through God by prayer alone. And I mean by prayer alone: not by any form of solicitation or advertisement or by fund-raising schemes. I have proved this method to be one which God honours in my personal experience, and what He has done for me as an individual He can surely do for a group of people, however large! (Lyll [1965]/1976:36-37).<sup>381</sup>

Third, God's supply also includes the use of appropriate means, which suggests that natural understanding and common sense have their place. Taylor recalled in later years that as a young believer, on his voyage to China, he did not always have 'sufficient faith in God to see Him in and through the use of means' ([1894a]/2010:35).<sup>382</sup>

The use of means ought not to lessen our faith in God. And our faith in God ought not to hinder our using whatever means He has given us for the accomplishment of His own purposes. ... it would appear as presumptuous and wrong to neglect the use of measures which He Himself has put within our reach, as to neglect to take daily food, and suppose that life and health might be maintained by prayer alone' ([1894a]/2010:36).

Fourth, concerning the word of God, Taylor articulated in later years the intimate connection between faith in God's revealed will and a vital relationship with the Incarnate Word:

The connection between full faith in God's will, as revealed in His written Word, and in the Incarnate WORD of GOD is so close and intimate, that you cannot separate them ... Begin to separate them and to study theology *instead of* the Word of GOD, rather than as a mere aid in gaining a fuller grasp of it, and if it does not make you weaker rather than stronger, you will be fortunate indeed! No! Take God's Word as it stands, and God's Christ as He reveals Himself to us, and enjoy *all* in Him (Beauchamp 1890:60).<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> The Chinese translation reads as follows: 要記住，按照神的方式做神的工作，斷然不會缺乏神的供應 (Chang *et al.* 2005:183).

<sup>381</sup> George Müller (1805-1898) is considered 'the grandfather of faith missions' (cited by Wigram 2007:65). In 1852, in reading a book on Müller's life, the young Taylor was impressed by his scriptural practices (2007:65). The Open Brethren Movement was also influential in the development of Taylor's faith principles (2007:65-70).

<sup>382</sup> Taylor's mother pleaded with him to purchase a 'swimming-belt' for his voyage to China, which he felt at peace after giving it away; he later recalled this mode of thinking was 'a mistake' (Taylor [1894a]/2010:35).

<sup>383</sup> For a critical perspective on Taylor's approach to the Bible, Wigram (2018) argues that his immediate, personal, and individual application lacked a comprehensive theology of mission; CIM missionaries were not

The implication is that faith in God is experienced as a present reality and a present sufficiency; this is learned through resting ‘all our soul’s interests on JESUS CHRIST’ and resting ‘all our soul’s weight on the Word of God (1890:60).<sup>384</sup> Therefore, Taylor’s statement illustrates that faith leads to contentment in the now:

Faith should always claim that that which GOD has given us, and is giving us, IS sufficient for present needs. If faith is only in lively exercise we shall know this, that no single thing we do not possess would be a help to us to-day (1890:48).

Fifth, in times of doubt, it is helpful to develop an awareness of the paradox that is inherent in faith, though it often baffles natural understanding and logic:

Ill that GOD blesses is our good,  
And unblest good is ill;  
And all is right that seems most wrong,  
If it be His sweet will (Taylor [1894a]/2010:56).<sup>385</sup>

Finally, the spiritual education of a missionary involves attunement to the *mysterium*, especially when missionary life is no longer a blissful and bright reality. As Bosch observes, missionaries face the dangers of ‘overactivity and loss of discipline’; getting into ruts and therefore resort to coasting along; losing their enthusiasm and the sparkle in the eye; and activities ‘easily become divorced from the tender intimate love which gave them birth and which ought to remain their mainspring’ (1979:22-23). Perhaps this is one reason that Taylor welcomed trials and difficulties as conduits for a fresh encounter with God:

Not infrequently ... our GOD brings His people into difficulties on purpose that they may come to know Him as they could not otherwise do. Then He reveals Himself as “a very present help in trouble,” and makes the heart glad indeed at each fresh revelation of the Father’s faithfulness. We who only see so small a part of the sweet issues of trial often feel that we would not for anything have missed them; how much more shall we bless and magnify His name when all the hidden things are brought to light! (Guinness [1892]/1977:172-173).

### 5.3.2 *The soul work of hope: the embodiment of kenosis*

Hope empties and withdraws the memory from all creature possessions, for as St. Paul says, hope is for that which is not possessed [Rom. 8:24]. It withdraws the memory from what can be possessed and fixes it on what it hopes for. Hence only

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equipped to meet the intellectual challenges to the Christian faith; and developments in evolutionary science and higher criticism did not lead them to re-think their theology (2018:20).

<sup>384</sup> For a counterargument to Taylor’s simplicity and experiential faith, Wigram contends that when critical ideas were surfacing in the West, an experiential understanding of the Bible was exported around the world through the activism of leaders like Taylor. Furthermore, the transfer of a ‘simple faith’ later became ‘one of the sources from which a fundamentalist theology developed in many Chinese settings’ (2018:20).

<sup>385</sup> This extract is from the hymn ‘I worship thee, most gracious God’, by Frederick William Faber, dated 1849 ([https://hymnary.org/text/i\\_worship\\_thee\\_most\\_gracious\\_god](https://hymnary.org/text/i_worship_thee_most_gracious_god))

hope in God prepares the memory perfectly for union with him (*The Dark Night*, in Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:448-449).

For both Jesus and Paul, their lives of self-emptying demonstrate hope in God alone, where God's way and wisdom are beyond natural human understanding. For Taylor, the notion of emptying begins with Jesus (Beauchamp 1890:43-44, 47), whose giving up was 'all good', laying aside his heavenly realm for the sake of becoming human (1890:43-44). Taylor's pioneering work follows the pattern of Jesus through 'self-emptying' (*kenosis*), and it was his very embodiment that brought hope to Chinese communities through his unconventional and counter-cultural approaches. In the footsteps of Christ, this kenotic way is integral to 'the essence of missionary spirituality', as captured by Reilly:

a spirituality for a life-style on the frontier of faith, a spirituality of being chosen and sent to that frontier in order to witness to Jesus Christ in a variety of imaginative ways among those who do not know him. It is a spirituality of reaching out, of going beyond, of self-emptying ... (1980:444).<sup>386</sup>

In Taylor's formative years in China (1854-1860), and working on the frontiers of Protestant missions in China, *emptying* became habitual through his acceptance that circumstances were not only beyond his control, but providential in the soul-work of hope:

well and wisely chosen, and tenderly and lovingly meted out. What circumstances could have rendered the Word of God more sweet, the presence of God more real, the help of God more precious? They were times, indeed of emptying and humbling, but were experiences that made not ashamed, and that strengthened purpose to go forward as God might direct, with His proved promise, "I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Taylor [1894a]/2010:40).<sup>387</sup>

However, these lessons in hope were not attained overnight. One of his recollections in later years attests to a purification of memory through the loss of earthly possessions; specifically, his valuable medical instruments. Though he perceived it as 'a great calamity' at the time, the deep soul work effectively transformed his understanding of God as the very atmosphere of his life. An allusion to the *mysterium tremendum* is thus discerned in one of Taylor's most Paul-like statements (cf. Acts 17:28), as follows:

I had not then learned to think of God as the One Great Circumstance "in Whom we live, and move, and have our being"; and of all lesser, external circumstances, as necessarily the kindest, wisest best, because either ordered or permitted by Him. Hence my disappointment and trial were very great ([1894a]/2013:63).

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<sup>386</sup> The full quote contains content oriented to contemporary missions in the Roman Catholic tradition.

<sup>387</sup> Taylor highlights in this context of sharing with younger missionaries at the CIM conference that missionary life 'is comparatively a smooth and easy one' compared to his early experiences in China (1854-1860).

The context refers to an early experience in China; when returning to Shanghai from a ministry trip in Swatow, he discovered that the premises in which his medicines and medical instruments were stored had been burnt down, including all his medical belongings. Feeling that circumstances were working against him, he admitted his failure in recognising the truth of Rom 8:28, that “All things work together for good”; hence his dilemma during a time of great calamity ([1894a]/2013:63). It is through these experiences of loss, and times of emptying and humbling, that he learned to embrace trying circumstances, and learned that God alone was his hope. Resonating to some extent with John of the Cross’ abovementioned quote on hope, the following extract demonstrates how ‘the end of all hope’ from ourselves and other earthly creatures effects a deeper oneness with God’s will and God’s ways:

Are those circumstances which are very exhaustive to us and which naturally cause us to faint greatly to be deplored, if they bring us to the end of *our* strength and bring in *His* strength? ... If GOD thus put in our way the only facilities and qualifications for doing this work aright, shall we be surprised or upset by them? ... There is nothing which should encourage us more than to be brought to the end of all hope from ourselves, from the flesh, from every human source whatever, because we are thus cast upon our Sufficiency, and it comes into operation (Beauchamp 1890:81-82).

Numerous examples of Taylor’s experiences of being ‘brought to the end of all hope from ourselves’ and of being thrust completely onto the divine sufficiency are recorded in his partial autobiography, *A Retrospect* ([1894a]/2010:38-92). It suffices to mention that his innovative ways of reaching out to the Chinese embodies *kenosis*, on the basis that he defied the norms and comforts of his Victorian culture by giving up Western attire in exchange for Chinese dress (in August 1855).<sup>388</sup> At the suggestion of Medhurst, a ‘veteran leader of the London Missionary Society’, Taylor was ‘led ... to adopt the native costume in preference to foreign dress, to facilitate travel and residence inland’ ([1894a]/2010:47).<sup>389</sup> This afforded access to ‘the quiet hearers’ and invitations into the homes of local Chinese people; in contrast, his older and more experienced companion, the Scottish evangelist, Rev William Burns, dressed in English outfits, was followed by crowds, rude boys, and ‘the curious but careless’, and waited outside homes

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<sup>388</sup> In a humorous letter to his sister Amelia, dated August 28, 1855, written by ‘a man with a long tail and shaven head’, Taylor’s ‘recital of my tribulation’ explains the ‘no pain, no gains’ process of letting the barber cut off his locks before he dyed his hair ‘a good black’ and had ‘a proper queue plaited in with my own’ (Taylor & Taylor [1911]/2005:335-336). Of Taylor’s eighteen preaching trips in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces (during December 1854 to June 1857), his eighth trip (to the Hangzhou Bay area) is considered ‘a major breakthrough’, as it was his first wearing Chinese dress (Chang *et al.* 2005:26-27).

<sup>389</sup> Karl Gutzlaff (1803-1851), a pioneer Protestant missionary, had a strong influence on Taylor’s innovative ministry approaches; he donned Chinese dress and made seven journeys to China during the period 1831-1835 from his base in Hong Kong (Taylor & Taylor 1965:14-17). Gutzlaff was also influential in the formation of the Chinese Evangelisation Society, which became Taylor’s initial sending agency (Wigram 2007:72-74).

([1894a]/2010:48). Several months later, Burns followed Taylor's example, adopted native dress, and enjoyed increased ministerial opportunities.

Like Paul, Taylor chose to live among the people in order to be a fragrant offering and an aroma of Christ, thereby bringing to visibility the Gospel. Thus, his intention to get closer to the Chinese people by moving from the confines and safety of the missionary compound community was kenotic and counter-cultural, as it resulted in a loss of reputation, great humiliation, and ridicule by other Western compatriots in Shanghai. From his observation, remaining in one's comfort zone proved ineffective as a mission strategy:

I have known of more than one who did not live among the people, leaving China disappointed after having preached thousands of sermons. I believe that if such men could have worked among the people all day, and have preached half the sermons, their life would have told so much more, that the sermons would have gone further (Beauchamp 1890:34-35).

Taylor's embodiment of *kenosis* situates him as an exemplar of a living sacrifice becoming a loving sacrament. His familiarity with the Chinese became an affront to the Western Protestant missionary community and indirectly confronted the arrogance of Western individualism. Undeterred by criticism, it was more important that his life be a tangible message and a visible sermon of the eternal hope in Christ. In fact, the blessed hope of Christ's return enkindled in Taylor a wide vision and an urgency for the evangelisation of China (Taylor [1894a]/2010:12):

all through the New Testament the coming of the Lord was the great hope of His people, and was always appealed to as the strongest motive for consecration and service, and as the greatest comfort in trial and affliction. I learned, too, that the period of His return for his people was not revealed, and that it was their privilege, from day to day and from hour to hour, to live as men [sic] who wait for the Lord ([1894a]/2010:12).

This expectation also instilled in Taylor a minimalist approach, of habitually clearing his house of excessive possessions such as books, clothing, etc. to the benefit of 'poor neighbours'. Conscious of the 'danger of accumulating' possessions, which occurred 'from thoughtlessness, or from pressure of occupation', he developed a practice of literal emptying; thus, in preparation of Christ's return, was ready to give 'an account of [his] stewardship with joy, and not with grief' ([1894a]/2010:12). This practice<sup>390</sup> resulted in 'receiving a great accession of spiritual joy and blessing'; in contrast, the retention of these possessions entailed 'a loss of blessing' ([1894a]/2010:12). Since Taylor's heart was expectant and possessed by Christ, he

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<sup>390</sup> Taylor viewed this practice of clearing his home of excess possessions as 'a profitable spiritual exercise', and of keeping his personal affairs in good order as a conscious stewardship in light of Christ's return (Beauchamp 1890:37-38).

was willing to be emptied of temporal satisfaction/possessions and divested of self-interest and status:

Many seem to think I am very poor. This certainly is true enough in one sense, but I thank GOD it is ‘poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing all things. And my GOD shall supply all my need; to Him be all the glory. I would not, if I could, be otherwise than I am -- entirely dependent myself upon the LORD, and used as a channel to help others (Guinness [1892]/1977:174).<sup>391</sup>

In 1856-1857 in Ningpo, three years after resigning from the Chinese Evangelisation Society,<sup>392</sup> Taylor was reduced to ‘poverty’ as a result of lack of funds and his continued generosity to the poor. It is worth stating therefore that Maria was aware of Taylor’s predicament and did not marry him for financial benefits (Taylor [1894a]/2010:84-87). Their pioneering spirit and sacrificial lifestyle over twelve years of marriage, which included the unconventional founding of the CIM, is a missional testament to mystical hope (Rom. 8:24): ‘for that which is not possessed’ by fixing the memory ‘on what it hopes for’ (cf. above).

For Taylor giving to the poor resulted in a paradoxical experience of emptiness and fullness; richness and poverty; and of measuring one's life by loss instead of personal gain (Beauchamp 1890:42). This *modus operandi* challenges the status quo of acquisition, power, and popularity. As Wickeri observes, ‘[p]ossessions are always a sign of power, and so renunciation is an important aspect of the gospel’ (2002a:349). To some extent this generosity to the poor reflects the ‘ethical dimension’ and ‘moral imperative’ of Paul’s mysticism, which Kourie elucidates, as follows:

Paul’s mysticism cannot be divorced from his emphasis on the ethical dimension. Believers are now free and their freedom is ‘in the spirit’ (Rom 8:1-2); yet this freedom does not mean licence. Whilst free, the community is now at the service of one another (1 Cor 10:23-24); love is the aim (Gal 5:13-14; 1 Cor 14:1). The moral imperative of the new life is directly opposed to ego-inflation, and to the contrary, emphasizes conformity to Christ (1981:77).

It is significant that Taylor found hope in Paul’s example as a missionary; in fact, he viewed Paul’s life as ‘an encouragement for all Christians for it would enable them to cope with inadequacy and to take steps of faith’ (Wigram 2007:98). His exposition at the CIM conference

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<sup>391</sup> Goizueta discusses the integral character of ‘the universality and gratuity of God’s love, and God’s preferential love for the poor’, not as contradictory, but as two mutually co-implicit principles (2017:219-237). He also critiques Western individualism from a relational perspective and on the basis God’s gratuitous love, as embodied in the crucified and risen Christ.

<sup>392</sup> For background on the Chinese Evangelization Society, Taylor’s sending agency, Woodbridge (2019:24-32) discusses the close connection between the Brethren missionary tradition, the formation of the Chinese Evangelization Society, and the Brethren influence on Taylor and the CIM’s modes of operation.

in 1886, focused on God's power made perfect in weakness; to 'glory in my weakness' so that 'the strength of CHRIST may rest upon me' (Beauchamp 1890:89); when greatly distressed and weighed down by afflictions, God's comfort and mercy abounded; and, at the proofs of God's grace in trials and affliction, Paul's 'very heart' went out in thanks to God, and 'his whole soul went out in praise' (1890:82). It is no small wonder that the story of the CIM is a testament to 'the grace of God' through 'human weakness'; and a story of God's 'faithfulness' and 'great goodness' (Guinness [1892]/1977:3); moreover, it was marked by the paradox of suffering and consolation, and of earthly loss and eternal gain ([1892]/1977:457).

Since Jesus' life was characterised by paradox, in whom 'heavenly glory and the cross coexist'; and who 'died on the cross in weakness yet now lives by the power of God' (Bosch 1979:79), it follows that 'the paradoxes of power and weakness and of life and death coexist in the ministry and faith of the apostle' (1979:79). Bosch notes that the paradox "For when I am weak then I am strong" (12:10) ...[is] "the most famous paradox in the entire New Testament" (1979:79).<sup>393</sup> Gorman views this paradoxical aspect of 'power in weakness' as 'undoubtedly the signature paradox of Paul's apostolic existence: that he found in his weakness and suffering the power of God' (2001:268). The rationale is that Paul saw in Christ's example of life a power that was 'defined and manifested in the most radical *kenosis* or powerlessness' (2001:303);<sup>394</sup> therefore, he continued Christ's narrative by 'reembodying it' and by passing it on to others, in the hope that they would become:

communities of power, marked not by their culture's understanding of honor, respect and control, but by the sign of the cross, the power of suffering love, God's power in weakness. This paradoxical kind of power gives both life and hope to these communities (2001:303).

Based on Paul's missionary spirituality, Bosch asserts that 'true mission is the weakest and least impressive human activity imaginable, the very antithesis of a theology of glory' (1979:76); by implication, weakness is 'a necessary precondition for any authentic mission', and 'an authentic characteristic of the apostolic ministry' (1979:76). In fact, as Bosch further asserts, '[n]o one has emphasized the weakness and fragility of the missionary as clearly as Paul did in [Second Corinthians]' (1979:76).<sup>395</sup> Paul's emphasis on weakness underscores that

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<sup>393</sup> Bosch cites Ernst Fuchs on this famous New Testament paradox (1979:79).

<sup>394</sup> Gorman explicates the context of Greco-Roman power in Paul's day where 'the greatest human power was imperial' (2001:269); thus, Paul's paradox of power in weakness is profoundly counter-cultural.

<sup>395</sup> Bosch's chapter entitled 'The Courage to Be Weak' (1979:75-90) is based on 2 Cor 4:1-18; 5:11-17; 6:1-10; 12:6-10.

missionaries are not ‘spiritual giants’, but rather ‘broken men [and women who] can lead others to the cross’ (1979:77).

Paul was deeply human, which offers hope; thus, his quotidian mysticism has implications for living fully with deep humility. Regarding the interrelated meaning of the words *humble*, *humiliate*, and *humility*, which are rooted in the word *humus*, all these words ‘involve bringing ourselves back to the earth’ (Johnson & Ruhl 1999:12-13). Since *humus* means ‘rich soil’ used in a garden to improve growth (1999:12-13), quotidian mysticism is accessible to the ‘priesthood of all believers’, and not confined to a spiritual elite. Paul could have used his special revelations from the Lord as a form of spiritual egoism or elitism; however, through the presence of the ‘thorn in the flesh’, which he initially regarded as ‘Satan’s messenger’ to bruise him, he realised that it prevented him from becoming ‘unduly elated’ (Bosch 1979:78). Rather than use his ‘thorn in the flesh’ as a form of masochism, or allow his ministry to become paralysed by it, he ‘turned this enormous liability into an asset!’ (1979:78).

In terms of the relevance of kenosis in contemporary missionary spirituality, Wickeri (2002a:332-356) describes kenosis as ‘God’s loving invitation of God’s divine infinity, so as to allow room for finite creatures to discover themselves and their freedom’ (2002a:347). He suggests that in addition to the Old Testament prophets who criticized the powerful (cf. Isaiah 42:1-4 or Psalm 22), ‘Jesus’ own approach to mission as announcing the reign of God and denouncing injustice is also an expression of the kenosis of God’ (2002a:347). Wickeri advocates for ‘a *kenosis* missiology’,<sup>396</sup> which is ‘both emptying and empowerment’; thus, it ‘can never be a triumphalist missiology’ (2002a:348). It also ‘must mean a renunciation of power’, particularly in the case of the churches of the North (2002a:349). The purpose is that ‘all peoples’ hopes and dreams may be transformed in God’s image’, which includes empowering ‘those who have been excluded and marginalized’ (2002a:348). In this regard, *kenosis* ‘keeps the church from initiating a new form of colonialism, and mission becomes the power of self-emptying’ (2002a:349). This kenotic approach addresses several important issues,<sup>397</sup> including the rediscovery of silenced and neglected voices in the Bible (2002a:378);

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<sup>396</sup> Kenosis missiology (Wickeri 2002a:348) includes several elements: first, it ‘means mission from below’; second, it is ‘defined by the listener and the speaker in dialogue’; third, it ‘emphasizes missions as the people of God among all of God’s people’; fourth, it is ‘an empowering missiology’.

<sup>397</sup> Wickeri’s article (2002a:332-356) discusses a *kenotic* re-reading of scripture; an apophatic approach to ecclesiology and community; a *via negativa* of mission; the development of a new ‘postcolonial’ approach to mission, including Asian perspectives on biblical interpretation; gender issues in the use of terms such as ‘empowerment’; critiquing existing structures of ecclesiology and forms of missiology; exploring ‘new occasions for creativity on the subject of partnership’; *koinonia*, etc. For broader inter-religious Asian perspectives on the topic of kenosis, the following source (2015) is recommended:  
<https://www.crvp.org/publications/Series-VIII/17-Disjunctions-shen.pdf>

moreover, it allows for ‘new expressions of community and *koinonia*’ to emerge from the margins, not at the centre:

the margins are in fact centers for other communities. They are also good places from which to critique power. But the margins can also be lonely places, and so new forms of solidarity among the marginalized are called for (2002a:345).

### 5.3.3 *The soul work of love: the embodiment of theosis*

Charity also empties and annihilates the affections and appetites of the will of whatever is not God and centres them on him alone. Thus charity prepares the will and unites it with God through love (*The Dark Night*, in Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:449).

The dynamics of love (charity or *caritas*) that John describes in *The Spiritual Canticle* underpins the purifying effect of the dark night, which is transformation in love. Employing the language of lovers, he speaks of their heart as ‘stolen or seized by the object of their love, for the heart will go out from self and become fixed on the loved object’ (1991:506). Two signs indicate whether the heart ‘has been truly stolen by God’, as follows: ‘if it has longings for God or if it finds no satisfaction in anything but him’ (1991:506). This infers possession by the Spirit of Christ (Yungblut 1997:120), which, in Paul’s case, is expressed in his ‘lyric poem of 1 Corinthians 13’, and in his admonition, ‘Make love your aim’ (1 Cor 14:1), as follows:

Possession of the Spirit is manifested by the chief mark of the Spirit: love. It is the very flame of this love that constitutes the warmth, the passion the constraint for the ethical. Of Paul himself it may be said that he was an effective evangelist not primarily because of his great mind, nor his extraordinary power of articulation in preaching, but because through his mystical identification with Jesus the Christ, he had become a great lover of men [sic]. It was his love for them that broke down the barriers (1997:121).

With reference to Col. 3:14, John of the Cross describes the ‘form and nature’ of love in the perfection of love, as follows: ‘since the more a soul loves the more completely it loves, this soul that is now perfect is all love, if one may express it so, and all her actions love’ (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:583). What is the significance of this mystical element of (soul) love for missionary spirituality? In some respects, Taylor’s view underscores that Paul’s heart was stolen by God. By being ‘in Christ’, Paul found the ‘keeping, living, working power’ for his life; thus, he was possessed by the Spirit and enabled to be holy/wholly for Christ:

it was so thoroughly “Not I, but CHRIST,” that there was no self-praise at all, and no self-consciousness, in his referring to the grace of GOD. Paul knew himself so well that he was sure that the life he was living was CHRIST’s work, and that in speaking of it it was CHRIST alone he was glorifying (Beauchamp 1890:61).

Such conformity to Christ, through union with God in love, is also expressed in terms of deification' or '*theosis*'. On the mystical interpretation of 'in Christ' and being conformed to Christ, Kourie states that '[t]his is the highest aspiration and attainment of human life, and effects "Christification" -- and "deification" -- whereby the believer enters into lives the very life of the Trinity' (1981:79). Goizueta suggests that *theosis* underscores 'the truly radical character of Christian soteriology as a mutual indwelling and participation in the Trinitarian life of God -- and that perichoretic life is inherently cruciform' (2017:227).<sup>398</sup> By being 'in Christ', Pauline mysticism demonstrates that *theosis* (as a participation in Trinitarian life)<sup>399</sup> has implications for *kenosis*. For Paul, *theosis* meant a participation 'in the crucified Christ, that is, in the self-emptying God revealed on the cross'; hence the defining characteristic of the incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ that makes deification or *theosis* possible 'is not only Christoformity but, more specifically, Cruciformity' (2017:226). Moreover, *theosis* 'points to human transformation that we might become like God' (Campbell 2012:368); and, by way of clarification, the believer's union with Christ, although patterned after the Father's union with him, 'is not equal to it; our union does not entail that believers become members of the Godhead' (2012:368). Thus, deification is not a dissolution of the self; rather, 'as a response to the gratuitous, kenotic love of God', human participation in divine life 'is uniquely and peculiarly human; it is the fulfilment of the self' (Goizueta 2017:225-226).<sup>400</sup>

Considering the foregoing elucidation, Taylor's embodiment of *theosis* might well be illustrated by his interpretation of the sufficiency of God (2 Pet 1:3), a sufficiency which God has 'thoroughly provided' for us, as follows: 'His divine power *hath* granted unto us *all* things that pertain unto life and godliness' (Beauchamp 1890:60). The implications of this sufficiency through union with God in love results in an outward flow of 'the gratuitous, kenotic love' of God. This is discerned in Taylor's exhortation to the CIM missionaries: 'we need to come into close contact with the Lord ... We must come to Him and into Him, if we are to obtain blessing' (1890:28). Thus, in order to establish 'heart contact' with the Chinese, missionaries needed 'to come in to them ... to become a blessing to them' (1890:28). Human embodiment of divine

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<sup>398</sup> Goizueta argues that the theological notion of *theosis* has been 'most fully developed in Eastern Christian mystical theology,' and is more prominent in Eastern Orthodoxy than in Western Christianity (2017:223). He cites several scriptural references, namely: the Genesis account of the image and likeness of God; 2 Cor 3:18; 1 Jn 3:2-3; Jn 17:20-23; 2 Pet 1:3-4 (2017:223).

<sup>399</sup> Campbell's chapter 'Union with Christ and the Trinity' (2012:353-368) discusses the various ways in which union with Christ relates to Paul's implicit trinitarianism (2012:353).

<sup>400</sup> *Theosis* is implicit in 'the central doctrines of creation and incarnation'; and is closely related to our 'destiny, *telos*, and salvation'; and made possible 'only through grace;' in this sense, 'salvation-as-deification is sheer gift' (Goizueta 2017:224-225). Thus, the roots of *theosis* 'are thoroughly biblical', and '[t]he notion of the Christian life ... as a participation in God is central to Christian theology from the beginning (2017:223).

love is thus a means by which God's mission (*Missio Dei*)<sup>401</sup> is carried out, as Taylor emphasised in the CIM's ministry among the Chinese:

No mightier power has been entrusted to us than that true sympathy which identifies itself with those whom it seeks to benefit; it carries the heart captive. And to get close access to the hearts of the people is our great aim: to win their confidence and love is our daily object (Broomhall 1915:356).

Taylor firmly believed in the 'mighty power in contact', of coming close to people, based on examples of Jesus' works of healing and mercy (Beauchamp 1890:29). 'There is much power in drawing near to this people, and there is a wonderful power in *touching* people' (1890:29), in order to provide comfort and impart a blessing. Embodying divine love is thus a manifestation of the Spirit's presence and a powerful means of life-touching-life, as follows:

I believe that any Christian, full of the HOLY GHOST, may often, by the imposition of hands in a very informal way, impart a real blessing. When I come round to see you, how heartily you shake my hand! I am sure there is something in contact: it is a real power that may use for GOD (1890:29).

Like Paul, Taylor was intensely personal and became known for his habitual intimacy with God. Through his very presence others felt a deeper sense of God's presence (Broomhall 2005b:415, 640). This mystical element of love, which engenders union with God in love, is inner soul work. It is the missionary's primary work, as described by John of the Cross:

Love is paid only with love itself ... the soul that loves does not await the end of her labor but the end of her work. Her work is to love and of this work, which is love, she awaits the end, which is the perfection and completeness of it (Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991:506-507).<sup>402</sup>

Love and faith working together was an overarching emphasis in the CIM's *modus operandi*, as highlighted by Broomhall (1936:11-16) and Houghton (1965:40-47). In the selection and training of missionary candidates, for example, Taylor insisted that love needed to be operative in the candidate before leaving for the field, since it was unlikely to be produced by 'a journey to China' or by a change of circumstances (1965:40-47). His rationale is that the work of 'a true missionary is *work* indeed', not romanticism; and cautions that 'any romantic feelings will

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<sup>401</sup> For further missiological discussion in relation to Sino-Christian theology, Chow's work (2013) on the topic of *theosis* addresses the (in)compatibility between Western Christianity and Chinese culture, Confucianism, etc.; he also highlights 'the bias of earlier generations of Chinese theologians who worked only within the Western (Latin) tradition of Christianity, completely ignoring the Eastern (Greek) tradition (Tang, The Foreword, in Chow 2013:xv).

<sup>402</sup> In *The Spiritual Canticle*, Stanza 9:7, John of the Cross refers to Job 7:2-4 to illustrate the soul enkindled with the love of God, yearning for the fulfilment and complete refreshment in the perfection of love (Kavanaugh and Rodriguez 1991:506-507).

very speedily be dissipated' and 'love itself is in great danger of growing cold' in the monotony, difficulties, lack of success, language struggles, cultural misunderstanding, foreign climate, ill health, lack of appreciation, etc. (1965:41). The inner work of soul love is thus vital for a dynamic and sustained missionary spirituality because, as Bosch asserts, 'the criteria for missionary service and spirituality are not in magnificent and romantic accomplishments, but in ordinary daily existence' (1979:33). Therefore, *theosis*, as a participation in the life of the Trinity, has existential implications for being a sacramental (or graced) presence in the world. With reference to 2 Cor 3:18, Bosch captures it as follows:

The true missionary knows that, in one way or the other, Christ Himself has to become visible in his [sic] life and conduct ... We are being transformed into His likeness, without even being aware it ... His image is projected onto us as missionaries and into us, taking shape in us and becoming visible until others recognize not us, but Christ in us (1979:56).

In being a sacramental presence, missionaries need to be aware of a spiritual condition that frequently results in the difficulties of missionary work, which Taylor refers to as the 'deadness of our own hearts' (Beauchamp 1890:108). At a CIM conference in China, he quotes a missionary's personal admission in this regard, as follows: 'Every year I am in China I get harder and harder, and get to dislike and to hate this people more' (1890:108). In counteracting this condition of soul, he identifies the love of God as 'the key' to understanding difficulties of working among the Chinese (1890:108); and encourages missionaries to nurture their heart with a universal view of God's love, which is far broader than the personal dimension of 'my love to God', or even 'God's love to me' (1890:107):

that love which GOD has toward every creature that He has made -- that love that leads Him to open His mighty hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing. If GOD sheds that love abroad in my heart, that love will not be discouraged by ... trying things .... The love of GOD will never fail; and the love of GOD will lead to reality, to genuineness of sympathy, which will bring us in contact with the people (1890:107-108).<sup>403</sup>

The deadness and hardness of heart can result from a dryness of soul through a lack of soul nurture; or of being out of touch with the tender intimate love of the lover-beloved relationship of *The Spiritual Canticle*, as expressed by John of the Cross. It might also result from the

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<sup>403</sup> Bosch comments that by remaining 'at a safe distance, there is a real danger of us becoming callous and insensitive in the face of the squalor and misery so many people in the Third World are suffering' (1979:73). The opposite danger is to be 'completely suffocated and burdened beyond endurance by the awareness of guilt feelings because we are unable to alleviate the distress of these people' (1979:73). Missionaries need to safeguard 'both their sanity and their faith', while also being careful not to over-compensate through forms of 'paternalism and condescension' (1979:73).

misconception that ‘emptying’ produces sterility, apathy, and coldness of heart. By way of clarification then, ‘Christian “self-emptying” is always a concomitant “filling” with the power of Christ that generates personhood and makes possible resistance to the disintegration of the true self’ (Goizueta 2017:226).

Taylor’s personal experience in April 1882 illustrates this emptying/filling movement amid intense struggle; yet, despite nearing the age of 50 and ‘almost at the end of his tether’ (Broomhall 2005b:404-405), his weary heart did not become hard, cold, or bitter. In fact, Broomhall states that ‘except for Jennie and China he would long to die’; he even wondered if the Lord would call him ‘to the only true rest’; furthermore, his heart was ‘ready to break’ at the thought of another six or eight months of separation from her (2005b:404-405). Despite these emotional struggles, he persevered; and was supported, encouraged, and restored back to health by other CIM co-workers in Chefoo, puzzled at Jennie’s concern over his health (2005b:404-405). It was during these intense months of travel and separation that Taylor had been feasting on the Song of Songs, which he expounded in Anqing in June at CIM meetings.<sup>404</sup> Paradoxically, from the depths of human weakness, the CIM missionaries were filled by the Spirit in contemplation of God’s love; a day of prayer and fasting followed (2005b:405). By October, weary and ‘burning out’, his letters reveal the extent of his physical condition: ‘I am getting old and feeble, and incapable of much work’ (2005b:405). By January, he was tempted to pack up and leave China, asking Jennie in England to pray for him that his patience and faith would not fail (2005b:405).<sup>405</sup> It is significant that in this low period, soul nourishment from the Song of Songs filled him with a new intimate experience of divine love, which kept his inner flame of love burning. Broomhall’s adaptation of the language of the Song of Songs and 1 Corinthians 13 is therefore apt in describing Taylor’s love motif, as follows:

[the] flame of sacred love that had been kindled in his heart ... burned with inextinguishable blaze ... Love was the impulse, the spring and sustaining power of his life. Faith to remove mountains without love is nothing (Broomhall 1936:13).

It is evident from these experiences of Taylor’s later life, that union with God in love vivifies acts of sacrifice and self-emptying in missions. Through the ongoing soul work of divine love

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<sup>404</sup> These expositions were later published in *China’s Millions* and *Union and Communion*, as elucidated in Chapter 1 (cf. 1.1.2).

<sup>405</sup> Taylor’s intimacy with God and his love for Jennie deepened over time; in July 1889, en route to America for the second time, and another separation from Jennie, his letter to her reveals the weight of the united power of ‘the world, the flesh and the devil’; yet with the desire that their whole life ‘be an ascending plane’ -- to meditate on God, gaze on Him, draw on His greatness and resources, etc. (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:450).

and a fuller participation in the divine life, these acts become love. John of the Cross's insights thus aptly describe the ambience of a loving sacrament, as follows:

She employs all her faculties and possessions in loving, in giving up everything like the wise merchant [Mt. 13:44], for this treasure of love has been found by her, hidden in God. She is conscious that love is so valuable in her Beloved's sight that he neither esteems nor makes use of anything else but love, and so she employs all her strength in the pure love of God, desiring to serve him perfectly. She does this not merely because he desires it, but also because the love by which she is united to him moves her to the love of God in and through all things. ... And her pleasure in all things and in all transactions is always the delight of loving God (*The Spiritual Canticle*, in Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:583).

Where missionaries face 'deadness of heart', the solution does not lie in recalling romanticism or seeking 'spiritual highs'; rather, the gratuitous and kenotic love of God invites the missionary to welcome 'all that comes our way -- even those circumstances that we don't want and would never choose' (Johnson & Ruhl 1999:68). Taylor admitted his struggle in this respect, that he often felt tempted in thinking that if only he were in different circumstances or had some other provisions than what he had; or if he had had more fellow-workers or more capable ones; if he had had better training, or were more capable or competent in various respects, he could better glorify God (Beauchamp 1890:48-49).<sup>406</sup> He realised, however, that these thoughts were not rooted in God, but were of 'the devil' (or, in contemporary psycho-spiritual terms, emanated from the 'false self'); yet, he assures that God will not withhold anything, and 'at the right time and in the right measure He will send the supply' (1890:49). By relinquishing the distortions and temptations of the 'false self', missionaries are freed to serve with loving integrity and a healthy interdependence:

True love is not just to be giving ourselves to others ... this may lead to them feeling inferior. The relationship between missionaries and nations has far too often been that of condescending benefactors and irritated recipients of charity. True love [and true charity], on the other hand, is accepting that you are dependent and expecting something from the other one. This attitude helps one to discover himself [sic] and also to discover avenues of giving. The best that I can give somebody is to enable him [sic] to become a giver (Bosch 1979:71).

As part of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:16), and with Christ as the head, the whole frame grows through active participation and is built up in love. Through humility, solidarity, and equality with people, a sacrament of love engages authentically with people, together working out their

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<sup>406</sup> Taylor's primary focus is on trust in the living God, not in 'money, or learning, or eloquence'; while he does acknowledge the role of 'auxiliaries' as 'means of bringing Christ and the soul into contact', they remain 'auxiliaries' (Beauchamp 1890:89-92, 109). Studies in theology, medicine, Chinese literature, etc. are to be viewed in the light of this primary-auxiliary distinction.

‘salvation with fear and trembling’ (Phil 2:12). Taylor encouraged this need for genuine friendship and biblical fellowship, stating that ‘it is far more difficult to get to know the people, than to acquire their language’ (Beauchamp 1890:106):

All the time we need for acquiring fluency in the language, may be prayerfully improved in the spirit of God-like sympathy for gaining knowledge of the people; so that when we speak to them, what we say will not fly over their heads (1890:106).

Where mission involves a crossing of geographical, cultural, linguistic, and religious frontiers, the missionary is intentional in overcoming paternalism and racial superiority. One of the core problems and pitfalls in Western approaches to mission, notes Bosch, is the following:

... only rarely do we allow them to *experience* ... with us. They do not go with us on a journey of discovery to search and find together. ... They get the ready answer but have not struggled with us in trying to solve the problem. ... We present ourselves to them as those who already have all the answers, who are finished products, and who have now come to tell them what to do to become like us. ... The result, more often than not, is that we train parrots instead of building up people’ (1979:68).

#### 5.3.4 *The soul work of grace: the embodiment of epektasis*

Without walking sincerely in the garb of these three virtues [faith, hope, and love], it is impossible to reach perfect union with God through love. This garb and disguise worn by the soul was very necessary for her to reach her goal, which was this loving and delightful union with her Beloved. It was a great grace for the soul to have put on this vesture, and to have persevered in it until attaining her end or goal, the union of love, which she so desired. Consequently she proclaims [— ah, the sheer grace! —] ... (*The Dark Night*, in Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:449).

Here, in this final and fourth stage, sheer grace is paramount. In union with the Beloved, the bride is clothed in virtues, which is a work of grace. The specific context for John is the realisation of ‘how great a grace it is’ to pass through the trials and to have experienced the ‘advantageous blessings’ from God (1991:449-450). The transformative effect is liberation from ‘the devil, the world, and her own sensuality’ (1991:449):

In having reached the happy freedom of spirit desired by all, the soul went from the lowly to the sublime; being earthly she became heavenly; and being human, she became divine, and arrived at having her conversation in heaven [Phil. 3:20], as is proper to this state of perfection (1991:449).

The above quote by John of the Cross refers to the wonder of the present reality that the soul experiences, both heaven and earth, human and divine, etc. *Epektasis* is thus inferred in Phil 3:10-11, where Paul writes of the possibilities of the present life. For Taylor, his immediate

hermeneutic renders the resurrection power motif as a present possibility; not only as an eschatological reality, nor even a sharing in the first resurrection (Wigram 2007:97).<sup>407</sup> Therefore, he believed it ‘was possible for [Paul] to attain to resurrection life and power so that while in the world he could live as one who was above and beyond its influences’ (2007:97). With reference to 2 Cor 5:17, Bosch explicates this ‘present reality’ in relation to the ‘exceptionally pregnant Greek concept *καιρός* [which] means the decisive moment, the turning point in history’ (1979:84-85). This ‘new order’ has not only ‘invaded and permeated our earthly historical existence’, it is ‘in the process of transforming it. Because the decisive moment has arrived, the apostolic ministry is “a fragrance of life unto life (2:16) ...”(1979:85). The missionary as a loving sacrament therefore lives in the ‘creative tension between the already and the not yet’ (1979:85). Bosch also views this as a ‘life-in-paradox’, as illustrated by ‘pots of earthenware containing a treasure’ (1979:87). It may also be interpreted as an embodiment of *epektasis*, where the element of pressing on in hope for a future reality is glimpsed and tasted in the present:

Christian hope does not spring from despair about the present time, however; it is based on that which is already a reality. It is both possession and yearning, repose and activity, arrival and journey. Hope is the connecting line between the already and the not yet, the penultimate and the ultimate ...”I have not yet reached perfection, but I press on hoping to take hold of that for which Christ once took hold of me” (Phil 3:12). Authentic Christian hope is hope-in-the-process of fulfilment. It is for this reason that Paul can say: we were saved (past tense) in hope (1979:87).

In facing the immense task of evangelising the world’s most populous nation, living in *kairos* time was a mark of Taylor’s spirituality, although he had an acute sense of linear or *chronos* time. Embodying Paul’s spiritual wisdom, Taylor practiced ‘redeeming the time, because the days are evil’ (Eph 5:16). He grasped the reality of the present moment,<sup>408</sup> as well as the opportunities afforded by God’s providence. In one of the lowest ebbs in the mission, 1874-1875, Taylor’s joyous and restful assurance is expressed, as follows: ‘My need now is great and urgent; God is greater and more near: and because *He is*, and is *what He is*, all must be, all is, all will be well’ (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:259).<sup>409</sup> The year 1874 was an exceptionally

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<sup>407</sup> Taylor’s emphasis on the ‘exceeding greatness’ of the resurrection power of Christ is related to his teaching on union and communion with Christ, and on the Vine and the branches metaphor (Beauchamp 1890:58-59).

<sup>408</sup> Taylor was a man ahead of his time; and because of his persistence in moving forward with the vision for inland China and sending CIM missionaries before the Chefoo Convention was signed (Beauchamp 1890:112-113), critics published in the newspapers that ‘the members of the Inland Mission and their leader would have been safer in the Asylum for Incurable Idiots than in China’ (1890:85-87).

<sup>409</sup> This low ebb is described as ‘Out of Weakness Were Made Strong’ (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:260-275).

difficult year for the CIM on the field, with rampant illness among members and a low point financially for the mission; in fact, only a balance of 67 cents remained in the accounts in April; and, in May, ‘not a dollar in hand for the general purposes of the Mission’ (Broomhall 2005b:217, 220).<sup>410</sup> That year was considered ‘pathetic in the extreme’ (2005b:251), when Taylor lay paralysed in his bed in London, and all the odds seemed to be against the mission. The depths of his soul and struggle at this low ebb may be viewed through a hand-copied meditation dated 1874 (2005b:750-751), entitled ‘Others May, You Cannot’.<sup>411</sup> Paradoxically, it was in the next year that the tide turned; and the CIM experienced its most historic decade, ushering in a new dawn of Protestant mission expansion in 1875 (2005b:251-253).<sup>412</sup> This milestone is an illustration of the ‘sheer grace’ following the dark night, and the ‘advantageous blessings’ that the soul receives from God in the transforming process.

The earthiness of being a sacramental presence in the world (metaphorised by Paul as an aroma of Christ, a fragrant offering, or pots of earthenware) suggests that present reality involves being at home in God, and resting in the divine assurance that all will be well. The contentment of being ‘at home with what you already contain’ is an ‘inner experience resulting from one’s level of consciousness’ (Johnson & Ruhl 1999:IX, 18). It is ‘the art of embracing reality’, and of ‘learning to accept “what is” instead of insisting that life be a certain way’ (1999:75, X). This is not a passive regression, but an active and dynamic process, which might be likened to a divine-human dance. Living this way with ‘agility and grace’ invariably ‘takes a lot of practice, but our practice studio is daily life’ (1999:X). It follows then that learning to dance in the wisdom of the Spirit is integral to becoming a loving sacrament:

Learning when to assert our wills and when to let go and unconditionally accept “what is” -- this is a supreme accomplishment. We can approach this give-and-take as a clumsy, chaotic struggle or as a graceful, choreographed dance. The difference is our measure of contentment (1999:76).

For Taylor, sharing the ‘*Gospel of Grace*’ amid crises, chaos, and cultural conflicts required an inner dance of grace, patience and wisdom; and, most importantly, the assurance of divine sufficiency (Beauchamp 1890:87). In dealing wisely and patiently with the ‘crafty’ Chinese people, grace was needed in order to manifest Christ; moreover, ‘*power*’ was needed to transform hearts ‘so hard, so materialised and earth-sunken’ (1890:89):

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<sup>410</sup> Taylor’s policy was not to appeal for funds, but rather to ask people to pray for God’s provision (Broomhall 2005b:218-221).

<sup>411</sup> As previously clarified (cf. 2.3.4, and footnotes 79, 80, and 81), this meditation is credited to G.D. Watson.

<sup>412</sup> Broomhall aptly describes the period 1873-1877 under several sections entitled: ‘all seems very dark’; ‘torn in two’; ‘strength in weakness’; ‘scraping the barrel’; ‘turn of the tide’; ‘an octopus mission’; ‘out of the long rut at last’; ‘the tentacles reach out’, etc. (2005b:206-323).

We are among a crafty people. Not to be tempted to meet craft with craft is not human – it requires Divine grace. To be guileless among the guileful requires faith in GOD. If GOD is the great Worker, and the work of GOD is the great thing in our hearts, we shall never seek to please Him by guileful and crafty ways (1890:32).

Observing that ‘hard missionaries’ are of little use, Taylor recognised that a different way was required in order to treat ‘offenders with grace’ (1890:87), as follows: ‘It is better to be trusting, and gentle, and sympathising, even if often taken in, rather than sharp and hard’ (1890:40). A missionary, as a sacramental presence, thus needs the soul work of grace:

But if there is a sufficiency of grace *in us*, if we can live *lives of grace* before them -- if when we are ill-treated we can *show* what grace is, if the less we are loved the more we love, the more we are tried the more grace we can *manifest*, we have an opportunity of *giving an object-lesson to these people* (1890:87).

In similar vein, Bosch maintains that it is possible ‘to be unaggressive and missionary at the same time. It is, indeed, the only way of being truly missionary’ (1979:33). Acknowledging that it takes guts to become a missionary – considering the realities of culture shock, language learning, inter-cultural adaptation, and lifestyle adjustments – missionaries ‘by and large, tend to be strong personalities’ (1979:45). This is usually expressed in nuanced and emotional terms, ranging from being firm and assertive to being stubborn and pig-headed (1979:45).

Given these prosaic challenges and personality traits, Taylor’s *Union and Communion* ([1894]/1931) and John of the Cross’ mystical poetry are especially helpful, as their writing is suffused with grace, sensitivity, gentleness, humility, and tender heartedness. Their mystical insights and personal application inspire a way of living in the ‘now yet not yet’, with an eye on both transcendent and immanent reality, which is an embodiment of *epektasis*. The poetic extract below, entitled ‘The Best Friend’,<sup>413</sup> is an example of the mystical vision that enlightened Taylor’s missionary spirituality. By gazing simultaneously on the Bridegroom’s face and on the ‘pierced hand’ of the ‘King of Grace’, the bride presses on ‘hoping to take hold of that for which Christ once took hold of me’ (Phil 3:12):

The Bride eyes not her garment  
But her dear Bridegroom’s face  
I will not gaze at glory  
But on my King of Grace –  
Not at the crown He giveth,  
But on His pierced hand:  
The Lamb is all the glory  
Of Immanuel’s land (Beauchamp 1890:144).

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<sup>413</sup> ‘The Best Friend’(Beauchamp 1890:144) is extracted from the hymn ‘Immanuel’s Land’ (also known as ‘The Sands of Time are Sinking’), first published in 1857 in *The Christian Treasury*, which is considered ‘a unique treasure in Christian hymnody’; viewed at <https://cpcissaquah.org/2020/02/12/immanuels-land/>

Living in the interim, between ‘the penultimate and the ultimate’, Taylor accepted that God places us in particular circumstances ‘because they are the best adapted for growth in grace, and for success in labour’ (Beauchamp 1890:88).<sup>414</sup> Paradoxically, after Taylor’s keynote address on ‘The Source of Power’,<sup>415</sup> at the Ecumenical Conference of Foreign Missions in June, in New York, 1900, he and Jennie settled in Switzerland to recover after several months of Taylor’s severe fatigue. It was during their rest and retirement that the devastating news of the Boxer Rebellion in China nearly caused his heart to stop beating (Chang *et al* 2005:115; Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:566). A total of 188 missionary martyrs were killed at the hands of the Boxers, which included 135 adults and 53 children, of whom 159 were in Shanxi (Broomhall 2005b:716). The CIM lost 58 missionaries and 21 children; and more than 2,000 Chinese Christians were killed (Chang *et al* 2005:115). Tucker describes the Boxer Rebellion as ‘the greatest holocaust in the history of Protestant missions’ (1983:185); and, according to Broomhall, it was an ‘imperial fiasco’ and ‘a display of Manchu weakness’ (2005b:717).

These latter days of Taylor’s and Jennie’s life required sheer grace. According to Tucker, the Boxer Rebellion was ‘almost too much to endure’, and Taylor ‘never fully recovered from the trauma’ (1983:185). Jennie’s soul companionship for nearly three decades, however, provided much needed solace and prayerful accompaniment, as she read the letters and shared in the pain of the devastating news. Taylor’s oft-quoted words reveal the poignancy of the situation, and his utter dependence on grace during this tragedy: “I cannot read; I cannot think; I cannot even pray; but I can trust” (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:566). Yet, within this state of weakness and fragility, Taylor and Jennie advised the CIM missionaries not to seek revenge against injustice by the Boxers, nor to claim compensation or indemnities for the losses, even though other mission agencies took a different stance. Applying Paul’s understanding of grace, the CIM’s response to the Boxers exemplifies a gracious response to loving one’s enemies (Rom 5:6-8). If this is ‘the heart of Paul’s Gospel’, as Gorman posits, ‘then the Good News forbids us from taking the life of our enemy into our own hands’ (2009:97); by implication, the good news is enacted in not seeking revenge on one’s enemies.

Positively that means that reconciliation and peacemaking -- not just God’s but ours, as ethical and political practices -- are integral to Paul’s gospel. These practices manifest justification now in anticipation of the realization of complete justice when the kingdom of God is realized in its fullness (2009:97-98).

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<sup>414</sup> Taylor needed to be both gentle and firm, sensitive and strong-willed for the sake of the Gospel; it also required risk and sacrifice, especially during ‘the heyday of Western imperialism’, the evils of Britain’s Opium Traffic trade, and ‘the unholy alliance between the Gospel and the gunboat’ (Kane 1994:199-200).

<sup>415</sup> The full text of Taylor’s sermon is included in Dorsey’s collection (2006:269-274); and further comments are provided in Murray’s chapter ‘The China Inland Mission and the Power of Believing Prayer’ (1902:95-115), as part of his collation of the conference publication, entitled *The Key to the Missionary Problem* (1902).

In light of Jesus' embodiment of *agape*, which has both vertical and horizontal dimensions, combined with Paul's teaching on 'faith 'made effective' (or 'working') through love (Gal 5:6)', Gorman asserts further, that '[t]here can be no separation of faith from love, of faith from action, of justification from justice' (2009:103-104).

This foregoing statement is illustrated by Taylor's stance toward the evils of the opium trade, which he expresses in the strongest possible terms, as follows: 'England is morally responsible for every ounce of opium now produced in China, as well as that imported from abroad' (Cliff 1998:76).<sup>416</sup> Social concerns and social action were thus integral to Taylor's missionary spirituality. Moreover, his unconventional ideas and innovative decisions meant confronting prevailing attitudes of Victorian culture and challenging the status quo of Western imperialism; they also brought necessary correctives to 19th century Protestant missions. A case in point is the CIM's acceptance of women as missionaries in their own right, which 'served as a counter-cultural impetus on both the Western/Victorian and Chinese/Confucian front' (Lam 2016:5). Not only did it take courage; it also called for grace, as the public criticism was fierce, as follows: 'The most eccentric missionaries are naturally those, many of them single women, belonging to Mr Hudson Taylor's CIM' (cited by Wigram 2007:208-211).<sup>417</sup> If Taylor's eccentricity is likened to fool's wisdom, then his unconventional methods underscored another Pauline paradox: 'We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored!' (1 Cor 4:10). Taylor was evidently a man ahead of his time and despite his 'eccentricity', women comprised nearly half of the missionary force in China in the years 1885-1900 (Barr 1972:127). The fact that married and single women went on to make a significant contribution to Protestant missions<sup>418</sup> in China and facilitated change in the perceptions and politics of formal education for Chinese women (Lam 2016:5) attests to reconciliation, peacemaking, and the restoration of justice for women.

Jennie (Faulding) Taylor was one of the first CIM recruits, who assisted Hudson and Maria with administrative and domestic duties even prior to the *Lammermuir* Party's departure

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<sup>416</sup> In Cliff's chapter, 'Fighting the Opium Dragon' (Cliff 1998:69-80), he states that on May 8, 1911, Britain agreed to end all exports by 1917 (1998:79). Benjamin Broomhall, a fierce advocate in the anti-opium campaign against Britain's evil trade, while serving in the CIM London's office, died on May 29, 1911, just weeks after the great announcement (1998:79). On May 7, 1913, the British Government announced that 'the opium trade is dead' (1998:79).

<sup>417</sup> On the role of CIM women and their ministries among Chinese women, several works are recommended, namely: Guinness ([1892]/1977, [1894]/1977); Tucker (1988); Griffiths (2004).

<sup>418</sup> Kommers' article suggests that more research is needed on the outstanding contribution of women missionaries and their influence on Protestant missions (2020:1-9).

for China in May 1866. In the days prior to her death from cancer (in Switzerland, 1904),<sup>419</sup> her letters are suffused with grace, which is described as a ‘sweet power of helplessness and dependence’, yet ‘[l]eaning upon her Beloved’; of deep satisfaction in Christ, yet asking big things for God’s glory, etc. (Taylor & Taylor [1918]/2005:573-581). She seemed to have grasped the import of the present reality of which Paul speaks. When asked about heaven, her reply was convincing: ‘The Bible says more about Him than it does about heaven. No, I do not think of heaven. He is here with me, and He is enough’ (Broomhall 2005b:743). Her imminent death, however, was painful for Taylor, as Jennie ‘begged’ him to ask the Lord to take her home, after two hours of ‘respiratory distress’ (2005b:743). The tension of the opposites is evident yet again in his mixed emotions, admitting afterwards that this was ‘the hardest prayer to pray’, to ask the Lord ‘to take her from me to Himself’; yet he was satisfied with God’s prompt response to his request. On July 30, 1904,<sup>420</sup> 33 years after the death of his first wife Maria, once again at the bedside of his beloved, grace infused his grief: ‘Never did I feel more gratitude than when my prayer ... was answered within five minutes’ (2005b:743). Though ‘heartbroken and desolate’ in private, he was composed at the funeral, rejoicing that Jennie had ‘entered into the joy of her Lord’ (2005b:743).

The fruit of Taylor’s missionary vocation is well illustrated by Broomhall’s account of his final visit to China (February-June 1905), where golden Chinese characters on scarlet satin banners displayed the following terms of endearment: “Benefactor of Inland China”, and “O Greatly Beloved!” (2005b:745). The following profound comment by an American historian underscores his enduring legacy: ‘[Hudson Taylor’s] name will never be forgotten as long as Christianity lasts’ (2005b:745). On the personal level, a contributing factor is that through a confession of weakness, Taylor had learned the value of ‘speaking out what the Lord was doing in [his] own soul’; and, by not keeping the fullness of light and joy to himself, he received power to glorify Christ, which brought a fullness of blessing to others (Beauchamp 1890:111). In some respects, this beatitude echoes the story of Mary of Bethany, who poured her expensive perfume on the head of Jesus. Though the disciples considered it wasteful, as it could have been sold for a high price to benefit the poor, Jesus considered it a ‘beautiful thing’, and

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<sup>419</sup> In September 1899, en route to North America, Taylor and Jennie sailed from China to spend four months in Australia and New Zealand. By that time, Jennie had become ‘a mother figure’ in the CIM, and unbeknown to her, this sailing was her final departure from China (Broomhall 2005b:637). The voyage provided rest and replenishment; in fact, Taylor was apparently ‘at his best’ off the coast of Australia enjoying his hobby of photography and developing the photographs himself (2005b:637).

<sup>420</sup> Jennie had been suffering from an abdominal tumour and loss of strength for ten months since July 1903; however, it was only in the last nine hours before her death on July 30, 1904, that she suffered greatly (Broomhall 2005b:743).

remarked: 'I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her' (Mt 26:6-13).<sup>421</sup> Since love begets love, Taylor's outpouring of love for God and China renders his missionary vocation a living sacrifice and a loving sacrament. In the final analysis, like Paul, this points to a mysticism of grace.

On the communal level, besides the longevity of the CIM/OMF and the efficacy of its ministry, the impact of literature in augmenting Taylor's legacy is a significant contributing factor. Writers and researchers continue to explore uncharted territory within the treasure trove of over 150 years of CIM/OMF literature. The endless interest in Taylor's life and writings is itself an example of *epektasis*, a constant reaching for new insights and new perspectives, and plumbing the depths of the heart and soul of the founder of the China Inland Mission. In summation, because his life was characterised by union and communion with God, his missionary vocation evinces a mystical path of faith, hope, love, and grace.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has explored Taylor's missionary vocation as a mystical path, with particular reference to the apostle Paul, who is considered a favourite of Taylor's. The apostle's life and writings had a special appeal, as the Incarnation of Christ was foundational to Taylor's missionary praxis. As discussed in this chapter, other notable factors include the intensely personal character of Paul's writings; intense intimacy with God; personal involvement in ministry; personal embodiment of his teaching; demonstration of living among the people; the fruitfulness of his apostleship; and the authenticity of his life and message.

For an understanding of the main tenets of Paul's missionary spirituality, experiential insights from Bosch's study (1979) were incorporated, given his assertion that the book of Second Corinthians is the choice biblical text for missionary spirituality. Additional theological-exegetical input from recent scholarship also informed the elucidation of key Pauline motifs, such as 'in-Christ'; union with Christ; Christoformity and cruciformity; social implications of soteriology for peace, reconciliation, and justice, etc. (Gorman 2001, 2009; Campbell 2012; Goizueta 2017).

Cognisant of the lacuna in Protestant scholarship on Paul the mystic, this chapter has endeavoured to enrich traditional (missionary) approaches through an integration of mystical interpretations of Paul; in particular, his Christ-mysticism; intimacy with the Trinity; mysticism

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<sup>421</sup> The story of Mary of Bethany is mentioned in all four of the synoptic gospels (Matt 26:7; Mk 14:3; Lk 7:37; and Jn 12:3).

of grace; quotidian mysticism; the resurrection motif as a present reality; etc. (cf. Stewart 1935; Kourie 1981, 2009b; and Yungblut 1997). The rationale is that in contemporary discussions of *Missio Dei*, the mystical emphasis is being brought to the fore, through topics such as contemplation and action; the essence of missionary spirituality; the rediscovery of mystical theology for mission; the invitation to intimacy with the Trinity; contemplative encounter and personal transformative experiences; kenotic missiology; etc. (cf. Reilly 1978, 1980; Wickeri 2002a; Laugerad 2008; Karecki 2009, 2012, 2013, 2014). Since Paul and Taylor were both cross-cultural missionaries who lived and moved and had their being in the *mysterium* (God as ‘the One Great Circumstance’), the Chinese yin-yang symbol has been included to capture the paradoxical motifs of stillness and motion; dark and light; rest and activity; *apophatic* and *cataphatic*; changelessness and change; etc. (cf. Yeo 1998).

By recognising Paul as a Christian mystic, and by integrating the mystical pulse as the *dynamis* of his missionary spirituality, this chapter has offered fresh perspectives on the mystical characteristics of Taylor’s life as a missionary, through a mystical-missional interpretation of *faith, hope, love* and *grace*. Although the exploration has focused primarily on illustrations from Taylor’s 19th century British Protestant missionary experience in China, a framework has been provided for describing *soul work* as God’s in-working in the soul in order to fulfil God’s good purposes for the person and for the world (Phil 2:13). The inner dynamics of this *soul work* have been derived from John of the Cross’ mystical insights, on the ‘function’ and ‘mission’ of *faith, hope, love* and *grace* (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez 1991:448-449). By way of summary, these mystical elements guide a person into deepening union and communion with God, as follows: first, *centre in God through faith* (embody *askesis*); second, *continue in hope* (embody *kenosis*); third, *connect in love* (embody *theosis*); and, fourth, *cultivate in grace* (embody *epektasis*).

The heuristic paradigm for exploring Taylor’s missionary vocation as intrinsically a mystical path has been based on Taylor’s habitual intimacy with God and underscored by Paul’s intimacy with the Trinity. In addition, they both fully embraced the paradoxes of richness in poverty; strength in weakness; freedom in surrender; joy in self-emptying. The paradigm therefore included significant contemplative encounters from Taylor’s 56-year missionary vocation, which occurred within a period of unprecedented mission opportunities, historical changes, and political chaos in China. It also highlighted that during periods of poverty, illness, and stress, he experienced the death/resurrection symbolism (notably, the low ebb of 1874, followed by the ‘turn of the tide’ in 1875). The paschal mystery is thus integral to a mystical-missional integration of Taylor’s vocation precisely because his lived spirituality

evinces the paradox of daily dying and rising with Christ. Moreover, by embodying the ‘Gospel of Grace’ among the Chinese, instead of playing craftiness with craftiness, or repaying evil with evil, his gracious attitude and gentle approach brought to visibility the love of God.

The paradigm in this chapter has therefore captured Taylor’s missionary vocation as a deepening journey *from a living sacrifice to a loving sacrament*, which is ultimately a mysticism of grace. Since the mystical imperative for missions originates in the heart of God (*Missio Dei*), and the divine purposes are fulfilled through self-giving and abandonment to God, the aroma of Christ rises from the earthy pot (a *living sacrifice*) and spreads near and far (a *loving sacrament*). In similar ways as Paul, the intensely personal character of Taylor’s writings; his personal involvement and ‘heart-contact’ with the Chinese; his personal identification with Chinese culture; etc. not only influenced the collective spirituality of the CIM but rendered him a gift to humanity and to the Christian Church at large. On ethical and social concerns, Taylor confronted the evils of the opium trade, opposed Western Imperialism and gunboat diplomacy in China, and challenged the status quo of Victorian culture. In defying his critics, his unconventional methods included the acceptance of single and married women as missionaries in their own right. This is an important factor not only in the CIM eventually becoming a catalyst for new movements (‘faith missions’), but in facilitating social change for women in China through evangelism and education. On these grounds, it is evident that the inworking of God in Taylor’s soul was used by the Spirit to fulfil the divine purposes in the history of Christian missions.

## Chapter 6 CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Purpose and aim of the research

#### 6.1.1 *An in-depth study of the mystical spirituality of James Hudson Taylor*

The mystical spirituality of James Hudson Taylor (1832-1905) has been largely overlooked in the voluminous literature over the past 150 plus years, even though his spiritual legacy has been profoundly influential on Chinese Church history, the ‘faith missions’ movement, and the history of Protestant missions (cf. 1.1). Furthermore, Taylor’s devotional commentary on the Song of Songs, *Union and Communion*, which was popular in the 19th and early 20th century, has not been given the attention it deserves. The contemporary neglect corresponds to the general neglect of the Song of Songs, one of the deepest and most difficult of biblical books. This study has therefore addressed the lacunae by exploring Taylor’s mystical spirituality through his leitmotif of union and communion, inner life, and soul landscape – a mystical approach that validates the importance of *Union and Communion* in understanding Taylor’s intimacy with God and the *dynamos* of his missionary praxis (cf. 1.1.4).

The new body of knowledge generated by this research is underpinned by several important trends, namely: the resurgence of interest in the Song of Songs; the rediscovery of the mystical roots of the Protestant tradition; multiplex ways of reading Scripture, including a retrieval of the mystical hermeneutic of the early Church Fathers; the call for a spiritual emphasis in mission from the global South; critique of historical mission methodologies, colonialism, Western imperialism; critique of hagiography in missionary biography, including the early CIM biographies on Taylor; etc. This wide spectrum of perspectives has underscored that this is *kairos* time for a recovery of the mystical dimension in Taylor’s life and writings, which this research has undertaken within the contemporary discipline of Spirituality.

#### 6.1.2 *The recovery of Taylor’s mystical wisdom for a 21st century readership*

Since primary sources (Taylor’s own writings and reflections) have been eclipsed by popular CIM biographies and other secondary sources, given the intriguing narrative of 19th century China missions, this study has focused mainly on primary sources. The overarching aim has been to recover Taylor’s mystical wisdom for a contemporary context, through attention to his inner life, an aspect that has been largely neglected in Protestant evangelical spirituality.

Therefore, as stated from the outset (cf. 1.1.2), this study has been undertaken as an inland mission to the soul landscape of the founder of the China Inland Mission (CIM).

The 'symbolic language of soul' (cf. 3.3.1 to 3.3.6) has been especially helpful for an holistic interpretation of Taylor's mystical spirituality, as its symphonic-like language attends simultaneously to both the transcendent and immanent realms, and to the spiritual and physical aspects of human experience (which includes sensuality and sexuality). Furthermore, it has been conducive to the convergence of a mystical interpretation and a missionary application in this research. Since soul language pivots on the human subject as the locus of transformation, Taylor's leitmotif of union and communion has been explored through three mystical-transformative paradigms, namely: 'from unrest to soul rest' (*Union and Communion*); 'from holy striving to wholly abiding' (*the Exchanged Life*); and 'from living sacrifice to loving sacrament' (*missionary vocation cum mystical path*). In sum, the symbolic language of soul, combined with mystical-transformative motifs, has generated new approaches and new paradigms for interpreting Taylor's writings and experiences. In bringing his mystical wisdom to the fore, this new body of knowledge has the potential to augment his spiritual legacy.

## 6.2 Outcomes of the research

### 6.2.1 *The recognition of Taylor as Protestant mystic cum missionary*

In identifying the leitmotif of union and communion as the hermeneutical key to Taylor's mystical spirituality, the relevant primary sources have been explored from three biblical perspectives, namely, the Song Songs (*Union and Communion*); the Fourth Gospel (*the Exchanged Life*); and Paul's life and writings (*missionary vocation cum mystical path*). This establishes the biblical rationale for the recognition of Taylor as a Christian mystic, and clarifies that his mysticism is not a magical phenomenon, nor an aberration of biblical truth.

The recognition and re-visioning of Taylor as a Protestant mystic cum missionary has been augmented by three biblical analogies. First, corresponding to the Song of Songs as an 'expression of soul love', Taylor may be considered a bridal mystic in the Song of Songs' tradition. Second, with reference to the Exchanged Life as an 'experience of soul rest', he reflects the tender heart of the beloved disciple of the Fourth Gospel. Third, having explored Taylor's missionary vocation as 'an embodiment of soul work', it is evident that he stands on the shoulders of Paul as a mystic cum missionary 'in Christ'. Thus, through the in-working of faith, hope, love, and grace in Taylor's soul, God entrusted him with an unprecedented mission vision that has been admirably compared to the apostle Paul's.

### 6.2.2 *Mystical text: an expression of soul love (Union and Communion)*

In exploring a lens for reading *Union and Communion* as a mystical text (cf. Chapter 3), eight resonances with the Western Christian mystical tradition and the Song of Songs' tradition have demonstrated the value of Taylor's spiritual/allegorical reading of the Songs of Songs, namely: *disposition; desire; discernment; desolation; delight; darkness; dignity; and detachment*. Integral to the mystical hermeneutics of Origen of Alexandria, Bernard of Clairvaux, Teresa of Avila, and John of the Cross – classical mystical (monastic) authors on the Song of Songs – these resonances enhance Taylor's missionary application of *being all* and *doing all* for the Beloved. For example, his emphasis on 'entire consecration' in *Union and Communion* has been explored as an expression of soul love and in relation to holiness/wholeness. Moreover, by developing his premise that unrest is a common problem in the spiritual life, often caused by a lack of knowledge on how to abide in Christ and how to deepen union with Christ, the human beloved's transformation has been traced as a journey '*from unrest to soul rest*'. Presupposing the biblical invitation to divine-human intimacy (with the Bridegroom of the soul, the Beloved, Lover, Friend, King of Love, God the divine Lover, etc.), this research suggests eight mystical elements and their corollaries for the cultivation of soul love, as follows: *disposition (be still); desire (be alone with God); discernment (be watchful over your own soul); desolation (be careful of little seductions); delight (be holy/wholly for the Beloved); darkness (be humbled by Mystery); dignity (be nurtured by beauty); and detachment (be a loving sacrament)*.

### 6.2.3 *Mystical transformation: an experience of soul rest (The Exchanged Life)*

The *Exchanged Life* has been explored as mystical transformation (cf. Chapter 4) based on Taylor's encounter of oneness with Jesus the True Vine during an intense spiritual crisis in inland China, which also engendered his habitual practice of drinking from the fount of Living Water. Since John's Gospel was revelatory and catalytic in correcting his misconceptions on the meaning of abiding in Christ, the reasons for his intense struggle with misplaced personal striving have been clarified. Mystical insights and psycho-spiritual have also informed the descriptions of Taylor's *pre-egoic*, *egoic*, and *transegoic* developmental stages, as his defining moment occurred at the mid-life stage (September 1869). The Exchanged Life has thus been identified as the peak of Taylor's spiritual journey, based on his immediate release from 'holy striving' as well as the lasting impact of restful abiding in Christ (or soul rest), which came to characterise his spirituality in the second half of life.

Taylor's spiritual crisis was exacerbated by inner conflicts and a sense of defeat; tensions within the fledgling CIM; family illnesses and death of their first child; and the weight of leading a pioneering mission amid tense political British-China relations. The communal context that supported his transformation has also been noted; in particular, his first wife Maria's calm spirituality and habitual soul rest, the collective spirituality of the CIM, and the wider religious influences of the Holiness Movement and Keswick teaching of 19th century Britain. Considering these multiplex factors, Taylor's transformation has been explored as a journey '*from holy striving to wholly abiding*', as follows: *disposition of unrest; desire for holiness; discernment of sin and neglect; desolation through weakness; delight of soul rest; darkness through suffering; dignity of wholly abiding; and detachment through letting go.*

#### 6.2.4 *Mystical path: an embodiment of soul work (missionary vocation)*

Taylor's missionary vocation is suggested as intrinsically a mystical path, considering the influence that Paul's life and writings exerted on his missionary spirituality, incarnational principles, and mission praxis. With Paul as an exemplary mystic 'in Christ' (hence the term 'Christ-mysticism'), the biblical rationale for the interface between Taylor's mystical spirituality and missionary spirituality has been clarified (Chapter 5). John of the Cross' mystico-poetic insights on *faith, hope, love, and grace* have provided an apt frame of reference for exploring the 'function' and 'mission' of these mystical elements in Taylor's missionary vocation. A 'dialogue' between John's mystical insights and Taylor's missionary reflections demonstrate that soul work is that which God performs within (the inner life) so that God's work through the person is manifested as fruit or fruitfulness (organic not mechanistic).

Based on this soul work, Taylor's missionary vocation cum mystical path has been characterised by faith, hope, love and grace, which involves deepening union and communion with God; hence the elucidation of his journey '*from living sacrifice to loving sacrament*'. First, the purifying of *faith* is evident in his total abandonment to God; personal exercises of simple lifestyle; utter dependence on God's supplies and surprises; and generosity to the poor (the embodiment of *askesis*). Second, *hope* in God alone enabled Taylor to remain resolute in his evangelistic vision for inland China; transcend criticism of his unconventional mission methods; confront his own cultural presuppositions; and adopt intentional practices of self-emptying, vulnerability, courage, humility, contextualisation, living among the people, etc. (the embodiment of *kenosis*). Third, a self-giving *love* became a mark of his missionary vocation through participation in the divine life (the embodiment of *theosis*). By living 'in Christ', he was able to draw on the all-sufficiency and power of God, while accepting suffering and

embracing paradox. Against all odds, he related to people on a personal level, and encouraged CIM missionaries to minister through genuine friendship, empathy, sympathy, heart-contact, and solidarity. Fourth, in looking back, the journey is all of *grace* and not of works. By continuing in the flow of grace through the highs and lows of ministry, Taylor experienced the resurrection power of Christ as a present reality (the embodiment of *epektasis*). Moreover, by keeping his gaze on the Bridegroom's face and on 'the pierced hands of the King of Grace', he incarnated the Gospel of Grace and extended grace to others, despite hostility, craftiness, humiliation, and persecution. The power of grace also enabled him to confront social evils and advocate for social reform and social justice (notably, Britain's opium trade); moreover, he was used of God to bring necessary correctives in mission through the CIM's acceptance of women missionaries, married and single, who became catalysts in women's education in China.

#### 6.2.5 *Implications for soul care in Protestant missionary spirituality*

Under the rubric of *soul care*, the principles ('the what') and the process ('the how') of Taylor's leitmotif of union and communion have been established. These soulful insights provide substance and sustenance for the application of three biblical imperatives, namely: love God and neighbour (Mt 22:37-39); abide in Me (Jn 15:4-11); and 'Go and make disciples of all nations' (Mt 28:19-20). The development of an inner life of *soul love* (the Song of Songs), *soul rest* (John's Gospel), and *soul work* (Paul's life and writings) has been suggested as a contemporary way of cultivating intimacy with God. Integral to this inner development is an awareness of the dangers of over-activism in ministry, burnout, coldness and hardness of heart, 'getting into a rut', disillusionment and despair, etc. (as discussed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5).

Taking Taylor's inner life and mystical transformation (Zhenjiang, 1869) as a cue, John's Gospel serves as an invitation to abiding and *soul rest*, through oneness with the True Vine, and constant filling by the Holy Spirit (cf. Chapter 4). Thirteen or so years later, he discovered afresh the mystico-poetic expressions of the Song of Songs, or *soul love* (cf. Chapter 3), which deepened his intimacy with Christ, the Bridegroom of the soul. This joy and wonder spilled over into spiritual blessing at CIM conferences (Anqing, 1882 and Shanxi, 1886). In terms of Taylor's mystical path, his correspondence and spiritual reflections over a 56-year period (1849-1905) attest that it is the inner work of the Spirit (the *soul work* of faith, hope, love, and grace) that produces fruit and fruitfulness (a primary image in Taylor's writings and a validation of the authenticity of his personal encounters with God).

Since the language of soul is also characterised by paradoxes, ambiguity, and tensions (and the dark unknowing or *apophasis* of mystical writings), Paul's mysticism of being 'in

Christ' is an invitation to dying and rising in Christ (the paschal mystery). Soul care therefore attends to this daily process of renewal and transformation, which leads to deeper awareness of Christ the Mystery (and loving union and life-giving communion with the Trinity). Moreover, in the most unexpected and trying circumstances of life, a missionary becomes sensitised to the *mysterium tremendum*; and, as Taylor discovered, of knowing 'God as the One Great Circumstance in whom we live and move and have our being' (cf. 5.3.2). Soul care in Protestant missionary spirituality may thus be nourished by the lives and writings of mystics, who are often regarded as 'gifts to humanity' and 'paradigms of authenticity'.

### **6.3 Value of the research**

#### *6.3.1 An inside-out approach: contribution from the discipline of spirituality*

In order to explore Taylor's leitmotif of union and communion from the inside out, Schneider's 3-step hermeneutical approach (cf. 1.5.2) has been successfully adapted for the overall structure of the study, and to address the experiential questions in an incremental way (cf. 1.1.4). In terms of the movement from the inside out, the *existential description* of Taylor's mystical text (which took shape from the age of 50 onwards), naturally led to a *contextual-analysis* to unravel his mid-life transformation and the historical-mission context of his mystical encounter (at the age of 37). Finally, when woven into the tapestry of his 56-year missionary vocation, the golden threads of faith, hope, love, and grace evinced a kinship with Paul the mystic and missionary; hence the *creative-construction* of his missionary vocation as a mystical path.

#### *6.3.2 An innovative study: contribution from the Global South*

The holistic/integrative study encompasses a both/and approach, in order to maintain a balance between the cerebral (academic/knowledge) and the experiential (soul/wisdom); in this sense it represents research from the Global South. It is also innovative with respect to its creative dialogue between studies in mysticism (the discipline of spirituality) and mission (the field of missiology). Using Taylor as a case study, his mystical spirituality has been aptly located within a biblical, mystical, and interdenominational Christian heritage; and viewed through the lens of three scriptural frames of reference (the Song of Songs, the Fourth Gospel, and Paul's writings), as well as spiritual traditions pertinent to his writings (the Western Christian mystical tradition; and the Wesleyan, Methodist, Brethren, Holiness, and Keswick traditions). These integrative approaches serve to foster ecumenical conversation and interfaith dialogue.

### 6.3.3 *An insider's perspective: contribution from the enduring CIM/OMF legacy*

Literature is an important CIM/OMF contribution to the wider Christian community; hence the significance of this Literature Review of secondary sources, which span the period 1892 to 2016 (Chapter 2). Given the proliferation of secondary source material, this research has intentionally focused on Taylor's writings in order to attune to the heartbeat of his passionate language, profound transparency, paradoxical experiences, and mystical traits. Having satisfactorily achieved this purpose, this study hopes to stimulate further interest in Taylor's original works so that contemporary voices may channel his charisma and enkindle the flame of sacred love that burned within him.

Regarding current OMF circles, my observation as an OMF member, is that *Union and Communion* (1894) has either been forgotten or ignored. This doctoral study has therefore been compelled to 'dig deeper' in order to unearth Taylor's mystical dimension, and thereby obtain a more authentic understanding of the founder of our mission. Furthermore, it builds on my master's research, entitled *The Canticle of Spiritual Direction: A Transformative Approach to the Song of Songs* (Lam 2012). By focusing on James Hudson Taylor as historical referent, and his leitmotif of union and communion as hermeneutical cue, his mystical spirituality has provided an intriguing 19th century British Protestant missionary lens to the Song of Songs.

### 6.3.4 *An integrative study: contribution from a practitioner*

As an alternative to the panoramic and narrative approaches frequently adopted in popular literature, this study offers spiritual guidance for the cultivation of intimacy with God. Since divine-human intimacy was the crux of Taylor's life and writings, the exploration of his soul landscape has provided practical insights for the cultivation of *soul love*, *soul rest*, and *soul work* in Protestant missionary spirituality. From a practitioner's perspective (specifically spiritual direction and retreat ministries), this research has the potential to inform evangelical spirituality on the importance of *soul care*, from a multidisciplinary perspective.

## 6.4 Stimulus for further investigative studies

### 6.4.1 *The limitations of this study*

This research has been limited to the original English version of *Union and Communion* and has not taken into consideration the Chinese translation. Thus, a linguistic, cultural, and symbolic comparison has not been undertaken, though this would have been enriching. Furthermore, primary sources have been selected to remain within the scope of the three-step

hermeneutical approach. Therefore, the CIM's periodical, *China's Millions*, as well as other texts by Taylor, included in Dorsey's collection (2006), have not been included.

With the specific focus on Taylor's inner life and personal spirituality, this study has not discussed the implications for the local church (as sending body), and mission organisations (as administrative and supervisory agencies). In terms of soul care in an institutional setting, practitioners would need to evaluate, test and adapt the research for group work (without undermining the individual's inner work).

#### 6.4.2 *Comparisons with holiness authors, hymn writers, and poets*

Since Taylor was popular within the circles of the Holiness Movement and Keswick Convention, comparisons with other holiness authors such as Andrew Murray and Amy Carmichael, and the poet Francis Ridley Havergal, would provide a broader context for exploring Taylor's biblical themes and 19th century evangelical interpretations. Chapter 4 of this research has only briefly elucidated the common themes between Taylor and Havergal.

#### 6.4.3 *Dialogue with Chinese scholars and Asian mystics*

This study has not undertaken comparative studies between Chinese authors such as Watchman Nee on the Song of Songs (1945); however, it would be worthwhile to engage Chinese scholarship on topics such as the Song of Songs, Christian mysticism, and mystical spirituality. Of interest also would be a Chinese contextual application of *askesis*, *kenosis*, *theosis*, and *epektasis*, to compare the differences; for example, between 'self-emptying' in a Christian sense and 'emptiness' in Taoism, Buddhism, and other Asian religions.

#### 6.4.4 *Further reflection for multi-lingual and multi-cultural contexts*

Given the distance created by readers' unfamiliarity with the literary ambience, cultural nuances, religious influences, and devotional overtones of 19th century Victorian English, coupled with hagiographical notions in the early CIM biographies, this study has sought to make Taylor more accessible to a 21st century readership. It has bridged the gap through attention to contemporary soul discourse and the use of experiential terminology (including spiritual direction insights and psycho-spiritual input for soul care). Further work, however, will be needed to adapt the academic terms for multi-cultural and multi-lingual settings.

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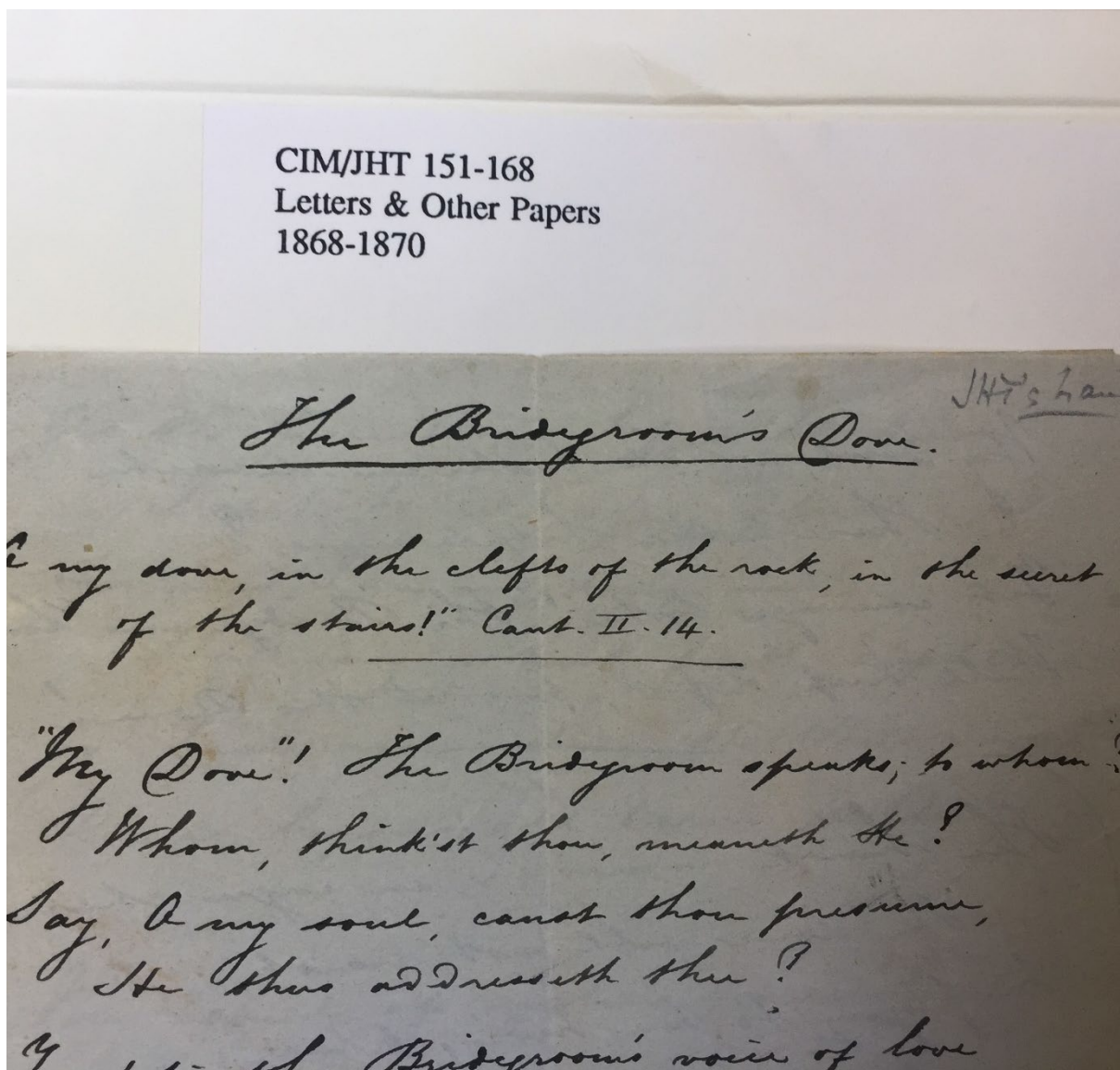
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## APPENDIX: THE BRIDEGROOM'S DOVE

The poem, 'The Bridegroom's Dove' (author unknown), is based on Song of Songs 2:14.

Taylor's original handwritten copy of this poem is housed at the CIM Archives, SOAS (cf. Box #8, CIM/JHT 151-168, Letters & Other Papers, 1868-1870). The following two scanned images are used by permission from the Special Collections at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, for research purposes only.

By way of clarification, the first image is superimposed with the file folder (for personal reference only). The pencil markings 'JHT's hand', on the top right-hand corner of the page, were presumably added by the original CIM biographers, Howard and Geraldine Taylor.



JHT: hand

The Bridegroom's Dove.

"O my dove, in the clefts of the rock, in the secret  
of the stairs!" Cant. II. 14.

- (1) "My Dove!" The Bridegroom speaks; to whom?  
Whom, think'st thou, meaneth He?  
Say, O my soul, canst thou presume,  
He thus addresseth thee?  
Yes, 'tis the Bridegroom's voice of love  
Calling thee, O my soul, His Dove!
- (2) The dove is gentle, mild, sweet;  
Deserve I then the name?  
I look within in vain to seek  
Aught that can give a claim.  
Yet, made so by redeeming love,  
My soul, thou art the Bridegroom's Dove!
- (3) Methinks, my soul, that thou may'st see,  
In this endearing word,  
Reasons why Jesus likens thee  
To this defenceless bird;  
Reasons which show the Bridegroom's love,  
To this poor ~~thing~~ helpless Dove!
- (4) The dove of all the feathered tribes,  
Doth least of power possess: