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“Real Lives of Real Missionaries”

A Webinar on the Life and Ministry of Timothy Richard

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Responses to Attendee Questions

1. Why does everyone know about Hudson Taylor but not Timothy Richard? My impression is that Richard's insights regarding culture and identification, etc. are familiar to academic missiology, but they are still foreign to much (most?) ground-level mission work; most practitioners don't seem to display much awareness of these principles. How can we as fellow practitioners (non-academics) make a positive, constructive contribution in this area?

It is hard to answer for certain, but I suspect the relative decline of Richard's Baptist Missionary Society (BMS) in the wake of World War II contributed to the fading of Richard's legacy, while Taylor's China Inland Mission (CIM) managed to grow and expand internationally (crucially, with bases in North America and Asia) as the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, thus preserving the Taylor family legacy. The heavy emphasis that both Richard and Taylor placed on the local context deserves to be communicated afresh to new generations of global Christians. Rigorous, honest study and engaging writing are necessary if we are to learn from the past, however this is no substitute for real-life modelling of sound principles. There is something compelling about a person or a family who is living cross-culturally in such a way that their shift in priorities—their cross-cultural identification—is obvious, and can be seen in the habits and relationships that define their daily life and witness. My medical colleagues often repeat a simple rubric: see one, do one, teach one. For those in our line of work: learn about it, do it yourself, encourage others to do it.

2. Was Chinese society equally as complicated as nowadays?

“Complicated” is a relative term, with most people in most times and places convinced that their lives are more than complicated enough. For the cross-cultural worker the trick is often to recognize that your ignorance and insensitivity are likely preventing you from recognizing the remarkable sophistication and complication of life in the new culture you have entered. It is difficult to view someone's words as intelligent when the listener's lack of linguistic and cultural facility renders those words “unintelligible.” When we understand less of what our partner is saying, we tend to view our partner through the lens of our incomprehension—as somehow less intelligent, perhaps even infantilizing them. Recognition that the ignorance is in this case on our side is a vital early step in the process of identification, and it requires cross-cultural workers to exercise a great deal of humility.

For Richard, the absence of expatriate BMS co-workers during his early years forced him to rely on local people to do much of the work that his lack of language skills prevented him (at first) from even understanding let alone doing himself. In 1872 Richard travelled with a local evangelists to attend the annual temple festival at Huilong Shan. While there he enjoyed weeks of hospitality, rich conversations on politics and religion with a host of educated personages from the surrounding countryside, and was able to preach to an attentive crowd of hundreds for an extended period of time. The experience profoundly influenced his practice of mission, but from a cultural point of view this allowed him to truly see how much intelligent and sophisticated thought—as well as good-spirited open-mindedness—existed in Chinese society. This helped him to respect his Chinese neighbors, granting them full agency and autonomy.

3. Did ideas about identity grow up alongside nineteenth century nationalism?

I apologize for not giving a more clear answer during the webinar. This may appear to be a simple question, but it masks a complicated aspect of cross-cultural work that requires great nuance and sensitivity.

Nationalism, the elevating of one's own cultural or ethnic identity to the exclusion of others, is one of the fundamental attitudinal barriers to effective cross-cultural work. For Christians, nationalism is often grounded in the mistaken notion that one's own culture is "Christian" and therefore sacrosanct, and therefore inherently superior to other cultures. Western missionaries crossing cultures in the nineteenth century often found it difficult to see much difference between their culture or "civilization" and their faith. By the early part of the nineteenth century western mission agencies were already discussing the need to raise the local people up to a certain level of civilization before they would be ready to fully accept the gospel, an idea that seemed natural to men and women steeped in the Victorian era ethos of progress and reform. At its most extreme, this "civilizing mission" conflated notions of cultural and ethnic superiority with the blessings of the gospel to justify the colonization of "backward" peoples and "lesser" races in order to civilize (i.e., westernize) them and their cultures.

For western missionaries to China, the two Opium Wars in the middle of the nineteenth century provided a litmus test for nationalism. Many chose to support western aggression against China—in some cases even though they recognized the wars as unjust—in order to force China to adopt the rules of "civilized" nations, bringing free trade and religious freedom (for Christianity) to the people of China. Beyond from geopolitics, nationalism also reared its head when missionaries made decisions regarding dress, architecture, music, and diet, as the line between becoming like Jesus and becoming western blurred. One study of late nineteenth-century American missionary women discusses how few of these women adopted Chinese dress, even as most of their male counterparts did. Legendary Baptist missionary Lottie Moon was convinced that there was a connection between godly morality and maintaining western cultural preferences: "by wearing Chinese clothes, eating Chinese food, and adopting other Chinese customs; is there no danger that [a man] may lose, by the constant habit of conformity, the power of prompt, manly protest against evil?"¹ Despite his strong identification with his Chinese neighbors Richard was led by his belief in the Kingdom of God's implications for all of life on earth to present western civilization and scientific advance as part of the blessings Christianity offered China—at times in ways that seemed to conflate science and "civilization" with the gospel. While it is true that by common grace Christianity certainly has in various times and places contributed positively to many aspects of human civilization, failing to distinguish between our cultural preferences and the imperatives of God's kingdom produces a practical inversion of the incarnation, a denial of the translatability of the gospel. For too many western missionaries, becoming a Christian required conforming to western cultural habits—a rejection

¹ Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 137–38.

of the Lord *who became like us* and lived a perfect Christian life within a specific human cultural environment.

Today we have unprecedented opportunities to be exposed to other cultures, thanks to tremendous advances in communication technologies and transportation over the last 200 years. And yet the targeted audience fragmentation of the internet encourages us to live our lives in comfortable media bubbles that affirm our biases and feed our nationalistic impulses, telling us over and over again that our thoughts and habits are normal, that we are right and “they” are wrong/different. Crossing cultures is an exercise in breaking out of the bubble, and learning to reject nationalism. It is not a blind acceptance of all models of human flourishing, for it is modelled on the Incarnate One who was a king and a servant, a prophet and a priest—who both judged and fulfilled. It requires us to embrace the incarnation, and to seek the Spirit’s guidance for how best to faithfully translate and then express Christianity within each culture.

4. *Did he speak Chinese before he arrived Shandong?*

Richard did not know Chinese before arriving in China. However, some scholars suggest that as a bilingual Welshman Richard may have had an advantage adjusting to a new culture and acquiring a third language. At a time when Welsh culture and language was under threat from the dominant English world, Richard may likely have been predisposed to sympathize with the underdog and privilege Chinese actors and preferences in his cross-cultural interactions. Richard worked for many years on mastering Chinese—including reading and writing both vernacular and literary Chinese, though composing in literary Chinese was always a challenge for him. Throughout his forty-five years in China Richard maintained tutors to help him with his writing, and his calligraphy was never particularly distinguished.

5. *Could you expand on your comments regarding his early church planting efforts? Why did he choose a "house church" format, sending people back to their homes rather than building a church building?*

Richard’s 1876 move from coastal Yantai to remote Qingzhou was an intentional transition designed to allow room for him to “reboot” his practice of mission. Richard’s experience of ineffective street preaching and central chapels combined with his positive interactions with Chinese sectarian religionists and his early exposure to indigenous principles of church planting through the writings of his contemporary leaders in the BMS (Secretaries Trestrail and Underhill were both proponents of what we now call the three-self principles); and all this drove him to strive to develop churches in Qingzhou that were as much as possible shaped and led by local Christians. His initial evangelistic travels throughout the county soon yielded a handful of “worthy” seekers of truth spread across a handful of villages. The practical result of all this was the establishment of several small churches in those villages, which met in the homes of local leaders for convenience and financial sense as much as anything. While growth made centralized gatherings attractive, Richard’s desire to avoid undo expatriate influence on Chinese worship forms and to avoid the alienation of the centralized preaching halls he had seen in the larger coastal cities—for locals in those cities eschewed the foreigners, with only vagrants and outsiders visiting those churches to see the barbarians—compelled him to maintain the separate village fellowships. On a monthly basis, then, Richard would bring the leaders of those fellowships to his compound in the county seat for a few days of training and equipping. If this sounds familiar, there is evidence that John Nevius wrote his early drafts of what would become his seminal *Methods of Mission Work* while staying with Richard in Qingzhou.²

² John Livingston Nevius, *Methods of Mission Work* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1886).

6. *Who were some key individuals—Chinese and expatriate—that Richard interacted with?*

Theologically, Richard was a product of his times, with the writings of Joseph Butler featuring prominently in his seminary training. During his initial years in Yantai Richard was blessed to learn from the teaching and example of a host of mission legends: Hunter Corbett, J.B. Hartwell, David Hill, Calvin Mateer, John Nevius, and Alexander Williamson were some of the giants Richard singled out for special appreciation in his autobiography. Of course, through conferences and writings he was familiar with many other fellow China workers as well. Richard's early years in China were also profoundly shaped by local ministry mentor and partner Shandong Baptist pastor Zheng Yuren, the BMS's first ordained Chinese minister. Richard often mentioned Edward Irving's *Missionaries After the Apostolical School* as the source of many of his notions of biblical mission practice, and even paid to have Irving's speech published and then distributed to the China mission community. Richard and Hill were instrumental in the conversion of former opium addict and famed CIM Shanxi pastor Hsi Shengmo 席胜魔, and Richard's Shanxi tutor Gao Daling 高达玲 went on to play an instrumental role in the development of the indigenous True Jesus Church.³ While in Shanxi Richard also read Legge's translations of the Confucian Classics alongside early Chinese Jesuit tracts by Ricci and others, Horace Bushnell's sermons, and Francis Bacon's writings on scientific method—all in the interest of finding ways to shift Chinese official attitudes towards Christianity. In later years, Richard worked with Young J. Allen, contributing many articles to Allen's *Review of the Times* [王国公报]. Perhaps more significantly, Richard enjoyed a remarkable level of interaction with some of the leading Chinese scholar officials of his day. Through his literary work and promotion of reform, Richard became acquainted with the leading self-strengtheners [洋务运动] Li Hongzhang 李鸿章, Zuo Zongtang 左宗棠, Zhang Zhidong 张之洞, and Zeng Guofan 曾国藩. In the next generation of reformers Kang Youwei 康有为 and Liang Qichao 梁启超 both mention the valuable influence of Richard and his publications on their thinking.

7. *Richard was a contemporary of James Legge. How much did they like/influence each other? Legge was also criticized for some of his unconventional approach to contextualization.*

Much has been written on Scottish missionary and sinologist James Legge and his contributions to both mission practice in China and the modern academic discipline of religious studies.⁴ Though roughly a generation behind Legge, Richard is known to have studied Legge's influential translation of the Confucian Classics and certainly would have encountered Legge's emphasis on contextualization through various conferences and publications within the larger mission community. Significantly, in the 1880s when Richard's expatriate co-workers in Shanxi accused him of adulterating the gospel, it was Legge (by that time the inaugural Professor of Chinese at Oxford University) who was invited in as expert witness to advise the Home Committee of the BMS on whether or not Richard's Chinese language publications were heretical. Legge sided with Richard. While the two men had similar instinctive attitudes towards Chinese culture, Richard was far less cerebral and more pragmatic than Legge. I have found little evidence of direct communication or interaction between the two of them.

8. *Are you familiar with the writings on Roland Allen and might Richard have had an impact on him?*

³ "Gao Daling," *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity*, <http://bdconline.net/en/stories/gao-daling>.

⁴ Pfister, Lauren F. *Striving for the "Whole Duty of Man": James Legge and the Scottish Protestant Encounter with China* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004).

Roland Allen’s early twentieth-century writings in support of the three-self principles (or indigenous principles) articulated by Rufus Anderson, Henry Venn, and others in the previous century remain influential to this day.⁵ The desire to establish self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating churches was quite common within the nineteenth-century Protestant China mission community, although there was much debate over how to actually realize this ideal on the ground. Many scholars believe the first “three-self” churches in China were up and running independently in southern Fujian by 1863 or even earlier.⁶ Roland Allen served as a missionary in China for only a handful of years before and then again after the Boxer Uprising of 1900, and there is no indication that he and Richard ever met. I have not studied Allen closely enough to comment on whether or not he read any of Richard’s work, but the ideas on church planting Allen traces through the writings of St. Paul were already widely disseminated through sections of the China mission community at that time—most paradigmatically by John Nevius.

9. What about his family life? Did he ever express doubts like some missionaries did? Such as Jesus being the only way of salvation? Did he have any interesting spiritual growth habits?

Richard’s first wife Mary was his close companion in ministry, joining him in his work—whether famine relief, education, or literature and publishing.⁷ Like her husband, Mary was also a gifted linguist, producing a series of Christian biographies and becoming a leading authority within the mission community on Chinese hymnody. The Richards were blessed with four girls who spent many of their years as children and some as adults living in China.

Richard was sorely disappointed by conflict with his fellow workers, and while it wasn’t always his fault his strong character rarely helped resolve conflicts. His deep reading of Chinese religious literature and extensive conversations with Chinese religionists took him in some strange directions—most famously in his contention that some forms of sectarian Buddhism showed signs of early and significant Christian influence. He was inclined to see the places where other religions intersected with Christianity and to look for ways to fill up what they were lacking with Christian truth. In his later years in particular he seemed so interested in other religions that many have suggested Richard in the end embraced some form of universalism. Throughout all the shifts and transitions in his life and ministry, however, Richard self-identified as a Christian missionary and maintained his relationship with the BMS.

In his letters to his mother his passion for the lost, his generous attitude towards money and possessions, and his willingness to give everything for the Kingdom come through quite clearly. Mary was a gifted musician, and her singing and piano playing punctuated the life and work of the Richard family in China. Richard was also at least aspirationally disciplined in his daily life, as this excerpt from his diary ca. 1876 reveals:

7:30–8 a.m.	Breakfast.
8–8:30	Worship.
8:30–10	Translation of English into Chinese.
10–12:30	Teaching of inquirers or preaching.
12:30–2 p.m.	Overseeing of orphans, teaching Sol-fa music, etc.
2–5	Translation into Chinese.
5–7	Miscellaneous work, walk, and dinner.
7–8	Church history in English.
8–8:20	Chinese worship.

⁵ Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours* (London: R. Scott, 1912).

⁶ David Cheung, *Christianity in Modern China: The Making of the First Native Protestant Church* (Boston: Brill, 2004).

⁷ “Mary Martin Richard,” *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity*, <http://bdconline.net/en/stories/mary-martin-richard>.

8:20–9	“Bacon’s Essays” and Butler [sermon collections and theological works popular at the time].
9–10	Conversation with teachers.

10. *It was striking to me that Richard envisioned a university campus ministry long before China even had any universities. I think the biography even said he tried to influence the govt to establish one in each province (for that purpose). I'm not sure we even had such a ministry in the West at that time. What do you think might explain his broad ranging vision?*

Richard was a romantic at heart—he loved the grand gesture, and always dreamed big. In 1885 Richard and his family returned to Britain for his first furlough since arriving in China in 1870. Richard’s intention was to secure support from his sending agency the BMS for a grand scheme to establish a university in each province.⁸ These schools would be run by a team of expatriate missionaries and local believers, and would focus primarily on training Chinese believers for ministry. Specifically, Richard designed these schools to equip believers to evangelize, shepherd congregations, *and* interact with Chinese scholar officials in ways that increased Christianity’s stature in Chinese society. This was a bold vision rooted in his desire to see all of China won for Christ, but it was prohibitively expensive in terms of finances and personnel: the BMS had no choice but to decline Richard’s proposal. It wasn’t until the aftermath of the Boxer Uprising in 1900 that Richard had a chance to establish one such institution in Taiyuan, Shanxi using indemnity monies to cover the expenses. While his initial vision was extravagant, it certainly planted the seeds for what decades later became the Imperial University of Shanxi, a fruitful cooperative project between the mission community and the provincial government.

11. *Could you give some view about the role of Timothy in the Gengzi Event and compensation?*

Richard is best known for the times when his life intersected with “big history.” In my talk I mentioned his role in organizing expatriate relief efforts during the 1876–1879 North China Famine, and some of the questions in this document touch on Richard’s contribution the Guangxu Emperor’s failed Hundred Days’ Reform [戊戌变法] of 1898.⁹ The third time Richard’s life intersected with major historical events comes at the end of the 1899–1901 Boxer Uprising.

After the summer of 1900 (a year identified in Chinese by its heavenly stem and earthly branch title of *Gengzi* [庚子]) the provincial government of Shanxi contacted Richard who was working in Shanghai at the time to see if he could help them negotiate a settlement with the different Protestant mission agencies who had suffered losses at the hands of the Boxers. Richard agreed, and approached each agency with his plan to both prevent further violence and bless Shanxi for years to come. Recalling his earlier vision of establishing a Christian university in each of China’s provinces, Richard proposed that the agencies ask collectively for only a modest indemnity which they would use to found the Imperial University of Shanxi. Motions within China to promote higher education meant that Richard in the end had to combine his plans with reforms already taking place in Shanxi, and in 1902 the school was formally established with a Chinese studies department and a separate western studies department staffed and managed by western missionaries and local believers. A translation bureau was also set up in Shanghai to

⁸ Richard, *A Scheme for Mission Work in China* (London: Baptist Missionary Society, 1885).

⁹ On the famine, see “North China Famine, 1876–1879” by Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley at *Disaster History*. <http://www.disasterhistory.org/north-china-famine-1876-79#more-50>. On the Hundred Days’ Reform, see Kwong, Luke S. K. “Chinese Politics at the Crossroads: Reflections on the Hundred Days Reform of 1898.” *Modern Asian Studies* 34, no. 3 (2000): 663–95

supply the school with the latest textbooks from overseas. Richard was criticized by some for his decision to eschew compulsory theological instruction (Richard thought such demands foolish in the wake of the Boxer violence), however a YMCA chapter was quickly formed in Taiyuan to promote (quite successfully) Christianity amongst the student body.¹⁰

12. What were the cooperation and tensions between Protestant and Catholic missionaries around that time in China?

Richard's relationship with Roman Catholicism is complicated and requires a fair amount of nuance.¹¹ Nineteenth-century Protestant missionaries from the United Kingdom were heavily influenced by a culture of anti-Catholicism, particularly after the reestablishment of the Roman Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy in England in 1850. For many Protestants, especially those from the non-conformist traditions, liturgical actions such as chanting, genuflecting, and bowing were viewed as acts of weakness and idolatry.¹² This was a point of contention in the 1880s between Richard and his Baptist colleagues in Shanxi who accused him of "leaning Rome-wards." They attacked his use of prayer books and recited liturgy in Chinese worship as being too reminiscent of both Buddhist formality and "Romish chanting." They also criticized Richard's use of Chinese Catholic apologetic literature, decrying its Jesuit provenance as well as the fact that BMS funds were being paid to Rome. To his newly arrived Protestant colleagues—viewing things primarily through the eyes of their contemporary British Protestant context—all of this was unacceptable.

Richard believed the differences between Catholic and Protestant Christianity were significant and important, and so he defended himself largely on pragmatic terms. He said he would happily replace the few pieces of Catholic literature he used with Protestant works as soon as somebody wrote something of equal or greater quality. Besides, he found that "if the parts that were Popish and Roman were omitted the Christian teaching was most excellent and could be used with great advantage."¹³ He explained his acceptance of more liturgical forms in Chinese Christian worship as a respectful adaptation that reflected Chinese understandings of propriety (礼) and holiness. As Richard explained in his address to the 1890 General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries to China,

[O]ur modes of conducting services are often too much Western and too little Asiatic. The early Christian services in Palestine were very different from those now held in the West. If Europeans and Americans can adjust Christian services to the taste of Western nations, without harm to their devotion, may not a Chinaman do the same for his own people?¹⁴

For some of his more aggrieved critics, it was enough that Richard associated with Catholic priests—though for this he made no apology. He enjoyed friendly relations with many Catholic clergy across China, and on several occasions he and his wife cooperated with local Catholic work. Shortly after arriving in China, Richard engaged in a lengthy theological dispute over the nature of the church with a priest in Jinan by the name of Angelini. The two men agreed to respectfully disagree and subsequently became friends, with Angelini attending Richard's wedding years later. Catholicism played an especially large role in Shanxi society, with one contemporary Chinese scholar estimating that as many as 30 to 40 percent of the population of

¹⁰ For more on the establishment of the university, see chapter 5 in Eunice V. Johnson, *Timothy Richard's Vision: Education and Reform in China: 1880–1910* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014).

¹¹ See chapter 7 in my *Encountering China*.

¹² Eric Robert Reinders, *Borrowed Gods and Foreign Bodies: Christian Missionaries Imagine Chinese Religion* (Berkeley: University of California, 2004).

¹³ Richard, *Forty-Five Years*, 144–45.

¹⁴ "The Relation of Christian Missions to the Chinese Government" in *Records of the GCPMC: Shanghai, 1890*, edited by W. T. A. Barber, J. r. Hykes, and W. J. Lewis, 413–14 (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1890).

the central Shanxi plain were Catholic.¹⁵ After arriving in Taiyuan to begin relief work during the 1876–1879 North China Famine, Richard worked with the bishop of Shanxi to conduct a survey of grain prices and conditions across the province. At one point during the famine it was widely believed that the angel Gabriel’s trumpet on the weathervane of the cathedral in Taiyuan was blowing the rain clouds away and extending the drought. Governor Zeng Guoquan 曾国荃 was eager to pit the foreigners against each other, and sought Richard’s support to rile up the population and have the cathedral destroyed. Richard responded by pointing out that the angel was merely a reference to a biblical passage. He showed the actual text to the governor and put an end to the rumors, thus saving the cathedral. After the famine Richard and Mary assisted a Catholic orphanage in Taiyuan by providing sewing machines and training older orphans in sewing and other vocational skills. The Italian Franciscan Bishop even instructed priests throughout the province to invite Richard to stay with them should he pass through their communities. The Richards and the priests would often visit each other, and from time to time the bishop would send the Richards wine and tomatoes from the church’s Shanxi vineyards.

13. Do you think Richard--his concept of the "worthy" people in a community--had been influenced by Matteo Ricci? In what way are Ricci and Richard similar or different?

Richard’s idea of taking the gospel first to the “worthy” comes from two sources. First, he points to his own reading of the Matthew 10 passage. Second, he confessed himself indebted to controversial Scottish preacher Edward Irving’s *Missionaries After the Apostolical School*, the published version of his keynote address to the 1824 May meetings of the London Missionary Society.¹⁶ Though wildly unpopular at the time, Irving’s address was revered by Richard fifty years later and was even quoted at length in 1885 by Hudson Taylor in the pages of the CIM journal *China’s Millions*.¹⁷ Irving presented to the assembly a radically faith-dependent practice of mission based on his interpretation of Jesus’s instructions to the disciples in Matthew 10. He understood “the worthy” to be “those who, like Cornelius, were devout towards God.” Richard found in this an imperative to reach out to those who were “sincere seekers of truth,” as opposed to the sycophants and con artists who often gathered around the wealthy foreigners. These “worthy” people, however, were not necessarily elites, but rather those already predisposed to accept Christianity—such as the sectarians who in practice and belief already had a degree of overlap with orthodox Christianity. Scholar officials on the other hand were considered by Richard to be very unlikely to convert—though several of those he worked with did become Christians. He reached out to Chinese elites for strategic reasons, in the hope that they would become more tolerant towards the faith and thus provide more freedom to Chinese evangelists. Richard’s evangelism of the worthy was not focused on elites, and when he did interact with elites it was for the instrumental purpose of increasing religious freedom for Chinese evangelists. Ricci, on the other hand, was more focused on converting scholar officials—though recent scholarship has uncovered the remarkable degree of ministry carried out quite effectively by the

¹⁵ This is likely an exaggeration, but it suggests a strong public presence. Liu Dapeng 刘大鹏, “Qianyuan suoji 潜园琐记 [Brief Notes from Qian Garden]” in *Yihetuan zai Shanxi diqu shiliao*, edited by Qiao Zhiqiang, 26–75 (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1980), 34. ¹⁶ For more on Catholicism in Shanxi, see Henrietta Harrison, *The Missionary’s Curse and Other Tales from a Chinese Catholic Village* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013); and Anthony E. Clark, *Heaven in Conflict: Franciscans and the Boxer Uprising in Shanxi* (University of Washington Press, 2014).

¹⁶ Richard even paid to have copies of Irving’s address reprinted and distributed to hundreds of fellow China workers. Edward Irving, *Missionaries After the Apostolical School: Three Addresses* (Tientsin: Tientsin Printing Company, 1887).

¹⁷ “Missionaries after the Apostolical School,” *China’s Millions* (October 1885), 119–22.

early Jesuits amongst the broader population.¹⁸ While superficially similar, Richard was making strategic choices different from Ricci.

Richard knew of Ricci and shared some of Ricci's ideas about contextualization and identification. Like Ricci, he strove to present the gospel in ways that made sense from within a Chinese context—in some cases using Catholic literature that reflected Ricci's sympathetic engagement with Chinese culture. Like Ricci, Richard also published and gave demonstrations of western science and technological advances. While both men hoped to impress and to earn favor with Chinese officials, Richard held little hope that scholar officials steeped in Confucianism would accept Christianity (he believed they were for the most part blinded to truth and thus “unworthy”). He made use of modern science and geography in order to convince Chinese elites of the practical benefits of Christianity *for their nation*. If they could be convinced that Christianity was no threat to their society but a potential source of blessing, then Christianity might finally become welcome in Chinese society, allowing Chinese evangelists greater freedom to spread the gospel across their nation.

14. Where can one find any of the Chinese apologetic writings Richard wrote? Do they still have influence or persuasive power today or has China changed too much? (Has any been translated back to English?) Like a CS Lewis type of writer? To what did his apologetic writings appeal in the Chinese mind?

Few of Richard's apologetic writings have been translated into English. His early catechisms and the discipleship materials he prepared for training church leaders have most likely been lost. Some of his later Chinese publications do exist, but they are really more like pre-evangelism works, designed to shift negative official attitudes towards Christianity. Thus he placed great emphasis on scientific and social benefits—things he thought would appeal to even hostile Chinese officials—with relatively less said about the personal or spiritual benefits of Christianity. This was a key area of contention with his BMS co-workers in the 1880s, who accused him of changing the gospel—a charge that Richard was eventually cleared of by James Legge and the BMS Home Committee. The scientific and social emphases of those articles leaves their apologetic value mostly trapped in time: for instance, the truth that the intellect God gave humans to study His creation was uncovering the great potential for using batteries to store energy is today neither tantalizing nor intriguing. Richard's determination to speak to issues that were important for his Chinese readership, however, remains a powerful challenge to contemporary China workers.

One of the best existing examples of Richard's efforts to change official minds is his *Present Needs* [今事要务]. Originally written as a short pamphlet to share with Shanxi officials in 1881, this collection of 100 proposals regarding transportation and industry, education and agriculture was presented as the righteous fruits of running a nation in accordance with the principles of God's Kingdom. The pamphlet was serialized as twelve essays in the influential *Globe Magazine*, also known as *Review of the Times* [万国公报], published between November 1881 and January 1882. Throughout, Richard presents these advances as the answer to China's “present needs.”

15. I may have not heard the part of Timothy's more messy and controversial part of political involvement. So what's your comment on his interactions and involvement with government officials, especially his bold suggestion of making comprehensive reforms in China and having foreigners as not only consultants but executives in key government offices?

¹⁸ Mary Laven, *Mission to China: Matteo Ricci and the Jesuit Encounter with the East* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011), 212–21.

Richard's initial motivations for interacting with Qing officials were twofold:

- 1) He believed that all people—even government officials—deserved a chance to hear the gospel. Richard actually thought it unlikely that many officials would come to Christian faith, though he records several who did over the course of his decades of work in China.
- 2) He also believed that general anti-foreign and anti-Christian biases on the part of Chinese officials resulted in heavy restrictions on the work of the local church in China. Richard viewed local believers as the primary force for growing the church in China, and it was his belief that changing the negative attitude of officials would result in more freedom for local believers. Richard consciously chose to undertake this propaganda push with official China in order to create space for the local church—and because he had the opportunity and the gifting to undertake such work and he believed that few of his colleagues at the time were well-positioned or well-suited for the task.

In his later years he found that many of the younger scholar officials that he had influenced so heavily through this work of publication and speaking, such as Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao, were suddenly at the vanguard of China's reform movements. Richard's reading of the Bible convinced him that God's Kingdom had implications for all aspects of life including politics, and that the gospel was not solely a matter of individual personal salvation. He was also a man of his times, and his faith like many of his fellow evangelicals included a degree of romanticism and idealism. This gave him a confidence in progress that combined with his personal flair for the dramatic to compel him to become increasingly involved in politics. His ideas were always large—his dreams were BIG—and so his reform plans (note the plural, for there were many) were always radical. As you mention, he did at one point suggest that China and several other less powerful nations consider establishing authoritative advisory councils of expatriates to assist with their reform and development. Richard hoped these benevolent advisors would guide nations like China as they entered the modern world, both aiding their healthy development and protecting them from the predations of the more powerful western nations. As I said, his ideas were big and radical! Many scholars—especially scholars from China—see Richard's hand behind many of the proposals produced by the reformers during the ill-fated Hundred Days' Reform of 1898. Whether or not his specific reform proposals or his increasingly vocal advocacy for reform was wise or helpful... those are questions that are still debated to this day.

16. Could you please describe some of the differences between what he termed High Evangelism with that which he referenced contrasting with that of Hudson Taylor?

It is popular amongst some scholars of missions to make a distinction between Richard's supposed "high evangelism" that focused on reaching the elites in society, and the more grass roots or "low evangelism" that was supposedly favored by Hudson Taylor and his China Inland Mission. While cases can be made for focusing evangelistic efforts on all sorts of different sectors of society, Richard himself never espoused a "trickle down" model of outreach where elite conversions would gradually spread to the lower classes. Rather, Richard believed that changing elite attitudes was a strategic necessity in order to create more freedom for the local church to carry the gospel to all people. Richard and Taylor were thus both pursuing the same goal of winning all of China, but by the 1890s both men had pulled back from the front lines to take strategic roles in support of the work of others: Taylor increasingly in administration and management, and Richard in propaganda work with Chinese scholar officials.

17. How is Richard remembered today by believers in China?

Over the last five years there has been a rekindling of interest amongst mainland Chinese believers in the history of Christianity in China. More and more Chinese Christians are searching online and talking to their elders in search of their own spiritual roots. This has translated even

into the academy, where a new crop of young scholars (increasingly Christians) are writing masters theses and a doctoral dissertations on the Chinese church's past. At present, little of this research filters down to the churches—or indeed has any effect on what is taught in Chinese education institutions. Richard is known in these circles for his famine work and his role in driving Chinese reforms. With limited access to archival materials, however, mainland scholarship on Richard is still in its very earliest phases.

For the non-academic, it is often the discovery of a Christian biography or perhaps a historical building or plaque in their own community that leads believers to a deeper knowledge of their spiritual ancestors. Chinese believers in Shanxi are discovering their connection to Shanxi University, and Richard's role in the resolution of the Boxer Uprising—as well as the stories of many of the other missionaries and local Christians who have served in that place over the last several hundred years. There is a great hunger for this kind of knowledge. Publishing more Chinese language works on the history of Christianity in China—either in translation or original works by Chinese scholars—should be priority. A better understanding of where they have come from can help Chinese Christians better understand and articulate their identity in the current challenging climate.

18. Why was Richard later pigeon-holed as a liberal by conservative missiologists?

This is a question that requires further study. My research so far has focussed on the first half of his 45 years in China, and we are still waiting for someone to carry out a rigorous study of Richard's later years. On the surface, there is no denying that as his time in China went on Richard was increasingly drawn to ideas that to this day seem strange and radical. There are writings of his that advocate for land redistribution and radical socialism in the United Kingdom. He was an early proponent of a proto league of nations, and even suggested that councils of well-meaning expatriates direct China and other nations as they established their places in the international order. A meeting with Buddhist reformer Yang Wenhui 杨文辉 introduced Richard to a Buddhist manuscript called *The Awakening of Faith* [大乘起信论], a text which led Richard to believe that this particular form of Mahayana Buddhism was a lost “higher” form of Buddhism that had been profoundly shaped by its exchanges with first-century Christianity. Richard—along with a few others at that time—suspected that early Christianity may have interacted with and influenced some early forms of Buddhism, perhaps by way of the so-called “Nestorian” Church of the East. These ideas and his experiences evangelizing “worthy” Chinese religious sectarians help explain Richard's accommodationism. For Richard, the mission task increasingly involved filling up or completing the portions of the gospel message that were lacking in China's own religious traditions by building upon—and surpassing—whatever truths they already contained with the gospel of Jesus. As Richard wrote in 1885,

In all my [evangelistic] interviews I never forgot that Christ came to fulfil and not to destroy. He comes to save, to regenerate, and to sanctify, and to make divine. To fulfill their noblest aims better than any other Teacher the world has ever yet seen. And He will not destroy one iota of good in *their* systems more than in Judaism of old.¹⁹

Richard was not a theologian, nor was he encyclopedic or particularly precise in his writings: accordingly, he offers few clear statements of his theological positions (regarding accommodationism, fulfillment theology, millennialism, universalism, points of contact, etc.). At the same time, he often inserts phrases in his writings that seem odd when viewed from today's orthodox Christian perspective. Other missionaries from many different branches of the Christian church were also exploring accommodationism around the turn of the century, but in the wake of the divisive fundamentalist-modernist controversy of the early twentieth this attitude towards world religions became clearly labeled by evangelicals as “liberal” or even heretical. Was Richard imagining a universe where all different religions were just varied cultural expressions

¹⁹ Richard, *Fifteen Years*, 11.

of the same salvation (inclusively) available in Jesus? Or was he merely working hard to find points of contact within other religions that would ease their adherents' path to salvation (exclusively) available in Jesus? There are many reasons to suspect Richard of having moved too far outside of orthodoxy, however there is still no definitive study of Richard's later theological development that places him within the context of his contemporary mission practitioners and theologians.

19. In your pursuit to know and understand Timothy Richard have you been able to meet any of his living relatives? If so, what insights into his life have they given?

I have been privileged to meet a few descendants of Richard, and have benefited from their friendship and their generous assistance with my research. As is the case with most descendants of overseas workers, some family members treasure the connection and invest time and energy exploring and preserving their family legacy. There are of course, some family members who are uncomfortable with their ancestor's evangelistic fervor, preferring to distance themselves from this part of their family history. I am not sure there is any consistent rhyme or reason to why some choose to embrace while others reject their missions past—apart from the grace of God. I know I have been blessed by the many descendants of different China missionaries who have graciously shared their stories and family legacies.

20. "History is a theological laboratory." This is an insightful statement. What lessons could we learn from history on identification & holistic ministry concerning China today?

While Richard is forthright about how much he learned from the more experienced China workers he met during his first couple years in Yantai, his greatest period of identification occurred only after he left the larger foreign community and moved to inland Qingzhou. Moreover, the crises brought on by the North China Famine of 1876–1879 greatly deepened his sympathy for his Chinese neighbors, transforming the abstract notion of identification into a deeply felt emotional bond. In other words, while mentors are important and valuable, isolation and crises can allow for a level of shared experience that supercharges the identification process, enabling a real instinctual sympathy for local people and their priorities.

It is probably also worth remembering that Richard engaged in humanitarian aid for three reasons. First, he noted that Jesus fed the hungry and healed the sick, and so being like Jesus surely did not exclude those kinds of service. Second, his reading of the gospels convinced him that the Kingdom of God promised more than individual forgiveness of sins, with implications for redeeming all aspects of life. Finally, and seemingly for him personally most significantly, Richard was compelled by his love for his fellow human beings to care for those who were suffering. When we follow Jesus's example in loving our neighbors, that love will compel us to undertake acts of service.

21. Facing a more stringent host than before, identification is not only a "my" issue, but also "their" issue. Would identification be also an attempt to live within the constraint set forth by the government? If so, holistic ministry will be not be as we see it.

This is a very insightful question, and I'm not sure there is one single definitive answer that applies to all circumstances. In as much as identification takes the local people as its focus, then all the things that shape and color their worldview merit careful consideration. It is impossible to understand contemporary Chinese society or the people that live within that society without taking seriously the important role of the state. And so I would say that sympathizing with Chinese people definitely involves learning to recognize as "normal" the various ways that local people relate to and interact with their government.

22. *How do you see the questions of localization as different today under the globalization going on not just from Western nations?*

The academic study of world Christianity is rooted in the recognition that Christianity is a polycentric faith with no one single global center—a faith that throughout history has expanded across the globe in a serial rather than linear fashion. Many scholars, in fact, now talk about “Christianities” in the plural as a way to capture the distinctive contributions of different cultural expressions of Christian faith to the global church. One practical benefit of this perspective on Christianity is the recognition that Christian missions is not now (nor was it ever) a unidirectional task of taking the gospel “from the west to the rest,” but rather has always been much more like the Lausanne ideal that evangelization requires “the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.” Globalization has made this reality unavoidable as affordable transportation and instantaneous communication technologies connect everywhere with everywhere else.

This apparent fluidity not only makes it easier than ever before to experience other cultures; it also facilitates the cross-cultural transition of lowest common denominator popular cultural motifs that threaten to erode other more locally distinct cultural habits and expressions. Glocalization is a newly coined term that tries to capture this ambivalence of cultural exchange in our interconnected world. For those who like Richard are involved in crossing cultural borders, it is important to realize that the goal is not to foster an expression of Christianity that, for instance, looks recognizably “Chinese” to an outsider. Rather, the goal is to grant agency to all believers, allowing them to worship the God of the Bible in spirit and in truth, in ways that resonate with them in their specific context. World Christianity places great emphasis on the translatability of the Christian faith, an idea rooted in the incarnate son of God who was born into a specific ethnic, cultural, and historical context. Just like Jesus demonstrated in his earthly ministry, Christianity brings a prophetic challenge to some aspects of every culture, while also fulfilling some aspects of every culture. A common Chinese criticism of Christianity during the previous century was that each new Christian meant “one less Chinese.” This is a misreading of the mission of Jesus: you don’t have to abandon your cultural background to become a Christian.

23. *How would you compare Richard's 3-self church planting with CPM and DMM approaches - like Person of Peace, etc. We personally know Curtis Sergeant who reported to us of starting an extensive church planting movement in Hainan beginning in the early 1990's.*

This is an intriguing question—something I have not had a chance to examine closely. Richard’s understanding of the “worthy” man from Matthew 10 appears similar to church planting methods that emphasize identifying the Person of Peace. Loosely influenced by the writings of early Scottish charismatic preacher Edward Irving, and further shaped by his conversations with Chinese sectarian religionists, Richard understood “worthy” individuals as people who were “sincere seekers of truth.” When he encountered people who were asking spiritual questions, making different life choices, and genuinely seeking to understand their lives, he focussed his efforts on leading those people to faith, believing the Spirit had prepared them in advance to more readily accept the gospel.

But Richard always believed that China would be ultimately evangelized by Chinese people: the churches he was involved with in Shandong sent out evangelists and church planters, fully supported by their congregations to spread the gospel throughout Shandong and even as far as Shanxi and Shaanxi. In this sense, evangelism for Richard was fundamentally “grass roots.” In his later years as he self-consciously withdrew from front-line evangelism to focus on changing officials attitudes towards Christianity, Richard never stopped believing that the nation of China was on the cusp of a grand, nationwide conversion. Encouraged in the early 1900s by what he perceived to be a proliferation of locally established Chinese churches and a growing recognition

amongst Chinese officials of the merits of Christianity (the focus of Richard's later work), he believed that

If we add can to these two growing blessings an adequate literature, and continue to live adequate lives, *can* we then doubt our being near the time when a nation shall be born in a day? This is what I call extraordinary statistics.

We had planned individual conversions. God had also planned national ones. We ought to thank God and take great courage. It is to this *national* conversion that God calls us now.²⁰

Long before the term "people movement" arose, Richard the bold dreamer remained convinced that God was planning to dramatically bring about the "conversion of China by the million."²¹

24. It takes almost a lifetime for missionaries to come to a place of identification. But today, many workers do not stay on the field for more than 10-15 year if even that long. How do we encourage workers to do so? But again, we live in a culturally different era when commitment looks quite different!

Commitment is a troubled word these days: everyone wants it *from* others, no one is interested in providing it *to* others. For me this question ultimately revolves around who God is and how we relate to Him. Faith is a commitment, but it is developed and expressed within a relationship—specifically, within the covenant relationship between God and His people that we see recorded in the Bible. Relationships involve trust, and we learn to trust others by observing them and walking with them over a period of time. That shared history then forms the foundation of our trust, the "proof" of character. I know someone is trustworthy because they have demonstrated trustworthiness *over time*. And this is the thing I just can't get around: relationships are rooted in time. Even "love at first sight" is only confirmed to be love over time. God can certainly do anything, but in most cases people build relationships—between us and others, between God and others—over time. Can we challenge future workers to take this reality seriously, and to dethrone their own convenience? Who is ready to pay the cost?

25. Is it possible to try to "over identify" with national peoples?

Identification that is superficial and fails to prioritize the local people can dwindle into an insulting expression of cultural appropriation. Remember, looking or acting Chinese is not the goal of identification; rather, the goal is to reorient one's perspective to align more closely with the local people. While this shift may express itself through the adoption of different clothes, mannerisms, and habits, it is really about trying to bring the gospel to bear on the things that are close to the heart of the local people. In Richard's words, identification should help us to "be less foreign and more sympathetic.... [T]o adapt Christian teaching and methods to Chinese needs."²²

It is also important to remember that all cultures are fallen, and therefore come under the judgment of God. This means that neither one's passport culture or the local culture is holy, and so all of us—not just cross-cultural workers—must seek God's wisdom to discern which aspects of what a given culture considers normative are challenged prophetically by the gospel, and which aspects resonate with the gospel and are fulfilled by the gospel. Different cultures will find their notions of human flourishing overlapping with different aspects of the gospel. To embrace wholeheartedly any one culture (Beijing hipster, Texas rancher, Somali fisherman, etc.) as fully "Christian" or "right" is to set up a false idol.

²⁰ Richard, *Fifteen Years*, 10–11.

²¹ "How to Make a Million Converts," in Richard, *Conversion by the Million*, 1:211–31.

²² "The Relation of Christian Missions to the Chinese Government," 413–14.

26. *Regarding your example of western hymns (and similar originally foreign things) that have been absorbed into Chinese church tradition to the point that they aren't experienced as foreign - how does a foreign worker negotiate trying to identify and be culturally sensitive with a Chinese Christianity that reflects Western Christianity back at us? We want to be sensitive to power dynamics, but the first thing local ministers ask us to do is, in effect, do things like facilitate English Bible studies, which increase and perpetuate the church's foreignness?*

Expatriates naturally begin the process of entering into a group from a different culture by thinking about how our gifts can be used to bless this new group. What we forget is that to the members of that group we are not only cultural outsiders; we (and our gifts) are also unknowns. With the best of intentions, early suggestions from local people regarding how expats can serve will necessarily reflect local best guesses at who we are—guesses that naturally emerge from stereotypes and gross assumptions about different outsiders. Hence, “as everyone knows,” westerners can teach English. The challenge is for the expatriate to enter into the life of the local community in ways that allow local people and especially local leaders to learn and see for themselves the kinds of gifts that *these particular expatriates* actually possess. This takes time, it takes humility, and it takes a willingness to do things that the expatriate may not value (English teaching?). Of course, this investment of time, humility, and engagement in locally directed work also allows the expatriate to begin to learn what their valued areas of gifting and service are *in this new cultural context*.

27. *I also have a question about identification. It seems that Chinese people think it's strange if you try to be Chinese when you are a waiguo ren [foreigner]. What is your advice about how to identify with the people in a balanced way?*

Identification is not about trying to be Chinese. For many expatriate workers in China, simple ethnicity makes such a thing impossible. What Richard emphasized and strove to model was a way of living and working in China where the cross-cultural worker's perspective was reoriented, where Chinese priorities were viewed with great sympathy, where (for instance) a cross-cultural worker might learn to recognize a Chinese understanding of family as “normal.” Identification allows China to become the authority for normal, rather than “back home.” While you don't cease being “you,” that “you” has changed, and developed a new perspective on the world that over time sees Chinese values as less and less “other.” This shift—involving sympathy as well as understanding—was viewed by Richard as a matter of not just effectiveness, but of integrity and respect. As he described it in an early essay, “...[W]hile sacrificing no truth of Christianity, our attitude must be less foreign and more sympathetic. Our brethren in the home lands adapt Christian teaching and methods to Western needs; our task is to adapt Christian teaching and methods to Chinese needs.”²³ Note, too, Richard's emphasis on “*Chinese needs*”: the goal was to present the gospel in ways that resonate more effectively with Chinese minds, addressing specifically “*Chinese difficulties*” (rather than addressing issues that matter most to the expatriate), and providing “such answers as would satisfy [Chinese people].”²⁴

28. *Very convincing defense of the need to truly identify with those whom you go to serve. What specific aspects helped Richard make that happen -- language learning, living away from the foreign compound, or what? Or was it more an attitude than tangible activities?*

²³ Timothy Richard, "The Relation of Christian Missions to the Chinese Government" in Lewis, Barber, and Hykes. *Records of the General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1890), 413–14.

²⁴ Richard, *Fifteen Years*, 8.

I think that identification is fundamentally an attitude. It is that sympathetic impulse that recognizes local values and priorities as normal. That attitude, however, takes time and effort to develop. Language learning is a key step for forcing shifts in perspective, allowing the “other” to become less strange. Living in an area where there are fewer people and things from one’s home culture to rely on is also a big help, forcing the cross-cultural worker to rely on the local community (with its unique values and priorities) to meet their daily needs. Under these conditions time can act as a catalyst, as it erodes some of the ties to home culture and gives the local more opportunities to assert itself. Perhaps more importantly, time also allows for shared life experiences: as relationships develop over time they go through high points (marriages, births, graduations, etc.) and low points (divorce, death, health crises, etc.). These provide opportunities to move from understanding to sympathy, as we rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn. I have become increasingly convinced that suffering has a profound role to play in cross-cultural ministry, as the light contained in jars of clay is only visible when the jar is cracked and broken. Sharing someone’s grief is a personal and powerful way to learn to sympathize with a different culture.