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Refining the Reformer, 1885–91

DURING HIS FIRST FIFTEEN years in China, Timothy Richard's missionary work had evolved through several approaches. After engaging in the traditional evangelistic work directed to the general populace, he decided to assume Chinese apparel, and to seek out the more educated Chinese with whom he could discuss religious and philosophical issues. During the famine of 1876–79, Richard added yet another dimension to his missionary service—practical social work. Reflections on this experience were to prove a major turning point in his life.

LESSONS FROM FAMINE RELIEF

During relief operations, Richard had experienced much resistance on the part of the officials to providing for the needs of the people. Besides their fear of a loss of power and control, another factor was their ignorance of both practical knowledge and the benefits that could accrue to them from peaceful relations with representatives of Western nations, most particularly the resident missionaries. Richard had become convinced that education in practical Western learning was the key to change. Chinese leaders could develop an understanding of the laws of God working in the forces of nature and then learn how to use these forces for the benefit of their people. The ultimate purpose of this Western learning, however, was to open these leaders to the Christian faith.

In Shanxi, he singlehandedly began this process of enlightening the scholars and officials with lectures and demonstrations of scientific Western

learning. Soon he came to realize that the benefit to them and the province could be multiplied with some sort of institutional setting. At first, Richard tried establishing a reading room or library staffed by an educated missionary where scholar-officials could come to read, discuss, and discover the newest information and inventions from Western countries. By 1882, however, Richard knew this setting would be insufficient to meet the need, and formed the idea of a college staffed by several educated missionaries where the student selection and learning process was more formalized. In 1884 this plan received the backing of his Shanxi missionary colleagues.

SEEKING SUPPORT FOR A NEW APPROACH

Richard was enthusiastic about their support, and by the time he left for his first furlough in 1885, his idea had expanded to become a passionate vision that included all the provinces in China with a college in Taiyuan as the model. One of the primary reasons he chose to return to England at this time was to solicit the support of his Home Mission leaders to spearhead a movement to provide a united financial backing for his educational strategy.¹ As he prepared his presentation, he stressed the many benefits that could accrue from such an effort. First, the officials would gain scientific information through Western learning that could avert future famines. Second, instruction in modern Western learning by missionaries could open the scholars, and ultimately all the people, to the Christian faith and engender peaceful relations between Chinese and missionaries. Third, employment of the scientific principles undergirding Western learning would lead to the modernization and reform of China, enabling the most popu-

1. Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 197–98. He recorded that this was to be the first time he articulated his plan to the home board's China Committee, although he had presented a similar plan first to his colleagues several months before in Taiyuan. He did not expect the BMS to provide total support for this or any institution. He merely wanted the BMS to marshal the support of all the mission societies, regardless of denomination. He believed there were philanthropists who would also be eager to back such an effort. Timothy Richard, notes, 26 February? 1886, indicated that another purpose of the furlough was the education of the Richard children. While all four girls were schooled by their mother at home in China, Timothy and Mary decided they should be given the advantages of an English education. The two oldest, Mary and Ella, were enrolled at the Seven Oaks Boarding School; Florrie and Maggie returned to China with their parents. See also Mary Richard, letter to brother, 26 April 1886; Mary Richard, letter to sister Mary Jane, 7 August 1886; Mary Richard to Mary Jane, 22 September 1886. All such unattributed references to unpublished communications are from BMS MSS.

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lous country in the world to enter trade and international diplomacy with Western nations as a peer. Fourth, the uniting of effort among the mission societies would remove needless duplication and competition, enabling a more efficient use of missionary funds and personnel.

In 1885 in London Richard carefully presented his plan in person to the leaders of the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), expressing his wish for “all the missionary societies [in Great Britain] to unite in establishing a high class missionary college in each provincial capital, beginning with the maritime provinces, in the hope of influencing the leaders of the Empire to accept Christianity.”² The scheme also called for a united effort by British mission societies to provide “highly qualified missionaries” (preferably and predominantly men with degrees but also including women) to establish a “high-class Training Institution-not inferior to our University Colleges” in each of the eighteen provincial capitals. These were to train the Chinese scholars as evangelists through a Christian curriculum emphasizing modern science, geography, and modern world history—the essence of Western learning.³

The BMS printed *A Scheme for Mission Work in China* for distribution among members of the Committee for China, which rejected it because the “scheme was far too great for their funds.” They did agree, however, to send six additional men, “and these specifically qualified so that they may [be] engaged in the best way possible.” After this rejection, Richard reemphasized, but to no avail, “the importance of opening colleges in the provincial capitals for the *training of accomplished native missionaries* [emphasis, mine] who would be given, besides theological work, courses of study in the various branches of knowledge taught in Western Universities.”⁴

The scheme was subsequently referred to the General Committee for final consideration. Furthermore, it appears that Richard, “to save time,” sent copies of the scheme to other mission societies while he was awaiting the final decision by the BMS. Richard expected to get its decision about this educational scheme as early as its May 7 meeting, but by May 15 the Committee still had “not given Mr. Richard what he wanted; kind words & promises bounded by ifs but nothing more definite.” Finally, the

2. Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 198; Richard, letter to “Brother and Sister,” 26 February 1886.

3. Richard, “Outline,” 4–5.

4. Richard, *A Scheme for Mission Work*; Richard to brother and sister, 26 February and 26 April? 1886; Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 198–99.

BMS General Committee insisted that the scheme was beyond its financial means; Richard was bitterly disappointed by what he regarded as their short-sightedness. “After this I began to realize that God would have me bear my cross alone, and that I must fit myself more fully for influencing the leaders of China.”⁵

In all fairness to the BMS, this amount was in fact beyond its financial capacities. Such a scheme for even the 13 maritime provinces would have cost approximately one million Tls. [approximately \$730,000 total or \$56,000 per institution] the first year alone, and Richard was talking about all eighteen provinces. However, he was not asking them to finance the entire endeavor, but only that the BMS coordinate a united effort by all British mission societies active in China, along with some British philanthropists, to endow the institutions. Since Richard even then was a staunch advocate of self-support, most likely he expected outside support to end after a fixed period of time at which point the Chinese government would take over the total support. These germinal concepts would come to fruition in the start-up by Richard of the Imperial University of Shansi in 1901. Like many visionaries, Richard was twenty years ahead of his time.

Upon the official opening of classes, Richard wrote a letter to the BMS on stationery with the university letterhead, pointedly recalling the Committee’s lack of support many years earlier:

The University proposed by me to the BMS in 1885–86 is now already opened at the expense of the Chinese government and your missionary Rev. Moir Duncan is the Principal of the whole Foreign Department . . . When I suggested the same scheme kindly printed by Mr. Baynes that a similar Educational Institution be started in the capital of each of the 18 provinces, Max Muller remarked to me that youth would often plant trees that would grow to the sky but Heaven takes care that they don’t!⁶

The remainder of Richard’s furlough in England was spent in gathering and dispersing information pertinent to education of the Chinese in Western learning. To fit himself further for the task of educating the scholars in Shanxi, Richard took science courses at South Kensington. In June

5. See Anon. [Mary Richard? dictated by Timothy Richard], handwritten “Note,” n.d. [1885?]; Mary Richard to Mary Jane, 15 May 1886; Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 199; Richard, *Wanted: Good Samaritans*. Most probably, the note accompanied this pamphlet Richard had written and printed for the purpose of informing other mission societies in preparation for the union effort.

6. Richard, letter to the BMS Home Secretary Alfred Baynes, July 10, 1902.

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1886, Richard went to Berlin and Paris to seek information about the best educational systems on the Continent. While in Berlin, the minister of education angrily refused to provide him any information; however, another senior education official, who was a Christian, “most readily gave [him] all the information” he wanted. In Paris, the minister of education was out of town, however, and Richard reported he got no information other than that they wanted to remove the name of God from their schoolbooks.⁷

Richard used the remainder of his furlough to share information about his work in China with different English churches and religious organizations, and was able to report that “several are impressed with the importance of the work considerably.” One gentleman was willing to give £1,000 while another had “taken the matter up rather enthusiastically and says that he can’t see why the Denomination cannot raise £20,000.” While Richard was encouraged somewhat by the interest shown, he felt the overall response was far less than the need. By September 1886, the Richards were aboard the S.S. Oxus on their way back to China, with Richard deep in anguish over the Committee’s refusal of support, yet undaunted in his vision. A fellow passenger was Marquis Zeng, who would later become a supporter of these new educational ideas.⁸

STRIFE AMONG COLLEAGUES

The Richards reached China early in November and were back safely ensconced at their home in Taiyuan just after New Year’s 1887. They had been away nearly two years, of which eight months were spent aboard ships. By then, a few reinforcements from the BMS had arrived, but Richard believed the number was still too few for the need. Apparently, Shandong was getting the larger number of reinforcements for a work that covered only eight counties; whereas, Christian tracts had been distributed in all 108 counties in Shanxi, two-thirds of them under Richard’s superintendence. Richard,

7. Mary Richard to Mary Jane, 1 March 1886; Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 199–200. Mary wrote that his physics course was being much interrupted by various meetings. Timothy indicated he took a course in electrical engineering.

8. Richard to “Brother?” 11 March 1886; to “Brother and Sister,” 16 September 1886. These speaking engagements included the BMS General Conference, Rev. Spurgeon’s Cathedral, the Religious Tract Society, a united missions meeting of Baptists and Congregationalists, as well as individual churches in Watford, Hastings, Cardiff, and Edinburgh, to name just a few. Early in the voyage, Richard commented, in passing, about Marquis Zeng’s early disembarking but gave no indication whether they had any discussions.

therefore, felt it only right that the greater number of reinforcements should be sent to Shanxi as the newer developing field had greater breadth. Therefore, soon after his return to Taiyuan, he spearheaded a resolution signed by all six Shanxi BMS missionaries requesting the Home Committee to send fourteen more missionaries to Shanxi.⁹

When Richard had first arrived in China, he had been just like most of the other missionaries in his primary concern for “saving souls” and belief that the only source of truth was the Bible. Within five years, however, he had experienced a paradigm shift that pressed him to begin to “seek the worthy.” He gave a sympathetic reading to the literature of the indigenous religions and philosophies and began to approach the educated Chinese or the leaders of the indigenous faiths rather than the illiterate populace. Both were considered contrary to orthodox practice. Some of his more conservative missionary colleagues, both members of China Inland Mission and those from his own BMS with fewer years’ experience in China, decided these practices were equivalent to heresy.¹⁰ By the time of his furlough in 1885–86, however, he was the senior missionary in Taiyuan, perhaps the oldest and best-educated, as well. Most likely, others did not feel at liberty to chastise him.

The tensions came to a head soon after his return from England. Richard likely attempted to continue his missionary work in the same vein as he had before, but by this time the CIM had sent more missionaries, and the BMS had sent young inexperienced reinforcements whose theology and methodology echoed that of the CIM. Therefore, Richard and those in sympathy with his thinking and approach now found themselves in the minority.

Unknown to Richard, some of these newer colleagues not only did not endorse his methodology but also had already actively opposed it by writing accusatory letters back to the BMS General Secretary; one such letter

9. Richard to Committee of the BMS, 4 March 1887; Timothy Richard et al. to Committee of the BMS, 12 May 1887, 4; see also Richard, Sowerby, and Turner, “Statement of Facts.”

10. Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 204–6. See Pfister, *Rethinking Missions*; Cohen, *Missionary Approaches*, 29–62; Wright, “J. Hudson Taylor”; and Broomhall, *Assault on the Nine*, 287–93. The first three are academic studies; the latter study is authored by a CIM missionary who is the great-nephew of Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, now the Overseas Missionary Fellowship. Richard’s letters to the BMS home secretary 1887–88 were replete with his defense of his mission methodology. It would seem to be vindication of both Richard’s and Taylor’s approaches that both are considered valid today.

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“inadvertently” appeared in the August 1886 issue of *Missionary Herald*, published by the BMS. This issue came out while the Richards were en route to China, so Richard had not seen it. His autobiography revealed that what irked him most at first was not so much their criticism as their unwillingness to wait to discuss their criticisms with him before sending letters “reporting” on him. One major target was the catechism he had written for new believers, imposing his views of the appropriate practice and study for six different levels of affiliation with the mission. Those who entertained achieving the fourth level of being a minister and beyond were expected to engage in a study program that included various forms of Western culture—in addition to parallel forms of Chinese learning and Christian subjects. These were his ideas for training native evangelists.¹¹

As their opposition grew more vitriolic, Richard chose to stop attending the meetings of the Local Missionary Committee even though he was its secretary. Richard also wrote a lengthy, detailed letter to Mr. Baynes, perhaps as a belated response to the published letter and his colleagues' letters. He subsequently sent another voluminous letter to the Committee of the BMS, also detailing his position. In it, Richard recounted a controversy three years earlier regarding his Chinese translation of the life of a devout Roman Catholic, intimating some points of disagreement were long-standing. In this same letter to the Committee, Richard asked them “to judge whether you think I am still worthy of your support or not.”¹²

Finally, Richard felt it behooved him to leave Shanxi Province in the interest of unity within the missionary community. He declared his willingness to accept an invitation to go to Peking to do translation work with the former missionary Dr. Edkins or to relocate to a coastal city. Years later, Richard characteristically wrote very little in his autobiography about this

11. Richard, “Translation of Order of Study.” On close inspection, the curriculum appears to be the embryonic form of the study program that Richard had hoped to initiate in the college of Western learning that he proposed in his union educational scheme to the BMS. Specific Western subjects included European mental and moral philosophy, geography, geology, physics, chemistry, mathematics, astronomy, Western medicine, Western history, and music for worship. A question arises as to why active opposition to Richard took so long to surface and mobilize. While there had always been a smoldering difference of opinion between the CIM and Richard, perhaps the arrival of BMS reinforcements during Richard's absence spurred the offensive.

12. Mary Richard, letter to sister, 14 April 1887; Richard to Committee of the BMS, 3 March 1887 and to Baynes and BMS Committee, 12 May 1887, 8, 15. The very fact that he wrote a sympathetic biography of a Roman Catholic was offensive to more fundamentalist colleagues.

conflict (only two paragraphs). But there continued to be attacks against his theological and methodological stance from members of the Shanxi BMS missionary community more than three years after he had left.¹³

During this time of internal conflict, Richard gave little attention to implementing his educational scheme since it had now become one of the central issues in the controversy within the missionary community. However, he did continue to have personal conversations with various scholars, Buddhists lamas, and officials in the government. Moreover, in the first five months after his return to Taiyuan, Richard delivered eight lectures to provincial officials.¹⁴

Mary disclosed in a letter that by then there were eighteen adults and eight children in their missionary community—“too many for one city don’t you think?” By autumn 1887, Richard chose to leave Shanxi Province, his home base for nearly ten years, because it was clear to him that as colleagues they “could never work harmoniously together. To remain would induce permanent strife, which would be fatal to missionary work.”¹⁵

A TIME OF TRANSITION

He and Mary went to Peking for a short time, but by November they found themselves in Tianjin where Richard was offered a salaried position (£600 per annum) to do translation work at the Arsenal, a military school and translation bureau run by the Chinese government. He declined this offer because he still “could not contemplate breaking with missionary work.”¹⁶

13. Mary Richard to Mary Jane, 23 June 1887, said they expected this move to be approved and take place in August 1887. Richard to Baynes, 26 December 1887, 1–4, gives Richard’s view of what was occurring prior to his departure. The fact that the attacks continued even after Richard left Shanxi until he assumed his position in Shanghai almost four years later, suggests that the conflict had degenerated to a personal level. Those critics he named in his correspondence were the younger missionaries who had just been sent to China as his reinforcements. It must be kept in mind that Richard himself, as a zealous young missionary candidate, had been attracted to the conservative, self-sacrificial principles that characterized the CIM. After his first ten years in China, however, he concluded he could most efficiently gain the most beneficial results for China with an educational or literary approach. There were few similarly-minded men in China at that time. See Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 204–5; Broomhall, *Assault on the Nine*, 289–93.

14. Richard to Committee of the BMS, 12 May 1887, 9; Richard to T. R. Glover, 26 May 1887.

15. Mary Richard to Mary Jane, 4? January 1887?; Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 205.

16. Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 206. He had been offered government employment

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They returned to Peking to await a reply from the BMS to their request to establish a BMS work in Peking. Richard took advantage of this time to write the pamphlet *Modern Education in Seven Nations*, which he distributed among the leading Chinese officials there. It “suggested that the Government should commence educational reforms by setting apart a million Tls. annually for it.”¹⁷ Richard finally did receive the Society's reply, which stated that no new work would be opened in Peking but that he should return to his first field of endeavor in Shandong. By now, however, Richard was so firmly convinced of his calling to reach elites and the value of his educational program that in his reply he insisted that he be permitted to found a college for Western learning in Shandong once he relocated there. Again he awaited the BMS General Committee's decision about his future work.¹⁸

The Committee's answer, in a letter dated September 26, was received some time before Christmas. It revisited all sorts of issues encompassed by the controversy in Shanxi, much to Richard's distress, and insisted that Richard go posthaste to Shandong, where earlier his colleagues had resolved that he would need to adhere to established BMS practice as elucidated in the local Committee policy. So Richard repeated his need for autonomy and the liberty to engage in his kind of missionary work.

For the first time Richard boldly placed partial responsibility for his difficulties on the doorstep of the BMS in London. He suggested that the home society exercise more supervisory discipline over the younger, inexperienced missionaries in Shanxi who continued to send letters about him. He requested London to send a deputation to China to study their missionaries' efforts there. He noted that he was leaving soon to go to Shandong

before, in 1882 by Governor Zhang Zhidong of Shanxi Province. Richard had declined the offer then because he thought missionary work to be even more important. Other missionaries had accepted government employment in educational or translation work. John Fryer (formerly of the London Missionary Society) did translation work at the Arsenal in Shanghai, and W.A.P. Martin (formerly of the American Presbyterian Mission) was appointed by the Chinese government in 1864 the first president or dean of the Western Studies Division of Tong Wen Guan in Peking.

17. Evans, *Timothy Richard*, 102.

18. Mary Richard to Mary Jane, 16 December 1887, stated that should the BMS not approve her husband's scheme to start the Christian college in Shandong, he planned to remain in Peking, where he had access to government officials and would teach English in the mornings. This would provide the needed income “should the Society grudge supporting him here.” Anticipating this, Richard had already posted a placard that resulted in inquiries from two Japanese and several Chinese.

with his former Shandong colleague A. G. Jones, to discuss further his possible placement there.

After five weeks in Shandong, in early 1888 Richard submitted a report to the Home Secretary concerning the outcome of his visit. “Now they will write you of the new conditions which they offer. They do not ask the former pledges. They wish me to start a small newspaper, and to start an Institution for the educated and leading classes in [Jinan]. They suggest (a) the appointment of one European and two Chinese to assist me; (b) that funds to get suitable teaching appliances and apparatus be got from private individuals in England.”¹⁹

For the next two years, Richard and Baynes exchanged numerous letters thrashing out not only the past controversy in Shanxi but the current issues involved in Richard’s joining his colleagues in Shandong. Because the Shanxi colleagues were continuing to question his orthodoxy, Richard did not want to have to endure this same questioning of his methods by less experienced colleagues in Shandong. Therefore, he hinged his placement in Shandong on an absolute demand for autonomy within a divided field of labor, of which his responsibility would be the educational and literary work within a two-county area, which included the provincial capital. This would give him the needed liberty to establish the college and run the newspaper. His colleagues in Shandong seemed supportive of his plan, but work of this nature was a drastic departure from the BMS’s adherence to the traditional modes of missionary work and might well meet with disapproval by the donating public.

Richard’s time in Peking meanwhile was quite productive in terms of translation work, presenting papers, and developing relationships with like-minded missionaries and various Chinese leaders. These provided an intellectual breath of fresh air. Richard presented a long paper on “The Influence of Buddhism on China” to the Peking Oriental Society on January 25, 1888, and Mary Richard felt it “delightful” that her husband’s opinions were listened to with respect, contrary to the “contempt of the narrow school in Taiyuan.”²⁰

Central to his scholarly work was the pamphlet on modern education, mentioned above, in which he described the educational systems or methods of seven leading nations of the world, emphasizing four methods

19. *Ibid.*; Richard to Baynes, 26 December 1887, 11; 25 January 1888; 12 March 1888; and 21 May 1891.

20. Mary Richard to Mary Jane, 21 January 1888, 4.

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of education—the historical, the comparative, the general, and the particular. He posited an inextricable relationship between specific knowledge or education and the progress of a nation.

Richard distributed this pamphlet “among the leading statesmen in Peking and personally presented it to Li Hongzhang in Tianjin.” It was probably during this visit with Li that Richard presented him the proposal that the Chinese government commence educational reform by setting apart for it a million Tls. annually. Richard made clear in this interview that this was “seed money” with a hundred-fold return sure to be realized, but only after twenty years. To that, Li responded China could not wait that long.²¹

Also during this time, the Richards renewed acquaintance with Marquis Zeng, who had been aboard their ship returning to China. The marquis, a former minister to London and Paris, also was the son of the famous statesman Zeng Guofan. On one occasion, Richard helped supply information to him about railways in England, which had been requested by the emperor's father, and there began their friendship. Mary Richard later taught English to his youngest son. Marquis Zeng had developed an enduring interest in European education and made a recommendation for an institution in Peking where Chinese and foreigners could freely meet. But he felt inhibited from actively promoting educational reform once he returned to China, due to accusations by the conservative political faction that he was unduly influenced by foreigners. On various occasions Richard was invited to meet with Marquis Zeng in Peking, and in 1888, Richard presented Zeng a copy of his scheme for modern education in China. “He [Zeng] approved of it most enthusiastically, and urged me to circulate the treatise amongst the highest officials, as he was convinced that the only hope for China lay in education.”²²

Meanwhile Richard and Mary started “a high class school in which the pupils were to pay for their education.”²³ Among those enrolled were

21. Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 206–7. Richard recounted: “Many years after, I met a Hanlin [scholar] who was in charge of a Chinese provincial college, and who had read my pamphlet on education. He told me that he had striven to carry out in his institution the former methods I had pointed out.”

22. *Ibid.*, 208–9; Mary Richard to Mary Jane, 26 November 1887.

23. Richard to Baynes, 13 March 1888. Richard's letter is unclear whether “class” here referred to social or academic level, but most likely it referred to academic level. He wrote that his wife Mary provided the instruction when he traveled to Shandong at Baynes's request, and that Mary also had “another school of a dozen poor orphan boys where she assists in teaching daily.”

three Japanese and one Chinese who was studying mathematics.” Richard took further advantage of this hiatus in his assigned missionary work to visit Japan in the spring of 1888 to study mission methods used there. He concluded with enthusiasm that the “educational work I was urging on the BMS was being carried out in Japan with great success.”²⁴

On his return to China, however, Richard heard from the BMS leaders that “though they would sanction my work among the literati and officials, they could not support any educational institution, as they considered that the Churches would not approve of such a use of their Mission funds.”²⁵ Once again greatly disappointed with the refusal of the BMS to support educational endeavors, Richard considered withdrawing from the Society. When his former Shandong colleague A. G. Jones received word of what Richard was considering, he telegraphed him convincing him to wait on this decision until they could visit Shandong together. In September 1888 they did go to Shandong together, where Richard personally presented to his missionary colleagues not only his vision for a Christian college but also his need for autonomy within a field in which there was to be an equitable division of labor. The outcome remained uncertain, and the Richards moved to Tianjin in May 1889.

In the meantime, famine again raged in Shandong. Richard chose to return almost immediately in June, first to lend his experience to the relief efforts, then later to attend a local missionary conference. For the first time, he contracted the dreaded “famine fever” that usually followed in the wake of famine and for a time was imminently in danger of his life. Though still convalescing from this attack, he attended the conference where his “scheme of educational work was agreed to by the Shandong colleagues, and a letter was sent to the BMS with the signatures of them all, twelve in number,” indicating they would welcome his arrival in October. Still in a weakened condition, during the first meeting of the conference Richard succumbed to “neural prostration” or perhaps “malarial paralysis,” a common sequel to “famine fever.” This caused him great pain and the incapacitation of his right arm for a time, delaying his return to Tianjin. His wife, also reported to be ill at the time, was “ordered” to go to enjoy the sea air at Yantai “for a change.” She had not been informed of the gravity of his illness

24. Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 211–12.

25. *Ibid.*, 212. Since the BMS was totally supported by voluntary contributions from members of the Baptist churches in Great Britain, it was absolutely necessary to have the full backing of the home churches. Yet what Richard was proposing was a radical departure from what the contributing public considered to be the domain of the missionary.

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until he arrived to join her at the coast to convalesce, being carried there on a litter at night. Letters written from Yantai informed the BMS of his illness and inability to return to Shandong due to his medical condition. Richard needed assistance writing, so Mary served as his able secretary.²⁶

By early October 1889, the Richards had returned to Tianjin to await the BMS's response to their news and the Shandong request. Richard was recovering very slowly, and the medical doctor supervising his care said "it would be madness" for Richard to think of relocating at that time.²⁷ Sometime later in October, Richard received a reply from the BMS in London that "the Committee once more rejected the scheme of a Christian college." As one protesting member of the Committee disclosed, this was the first time in at least twenty years the Committee had denied a unanimous request from the mission field.²⁸ The emotional shock most probably slowed Richard's recovery, and perhaps he even suffered a relapse, as his wife continued to have to do most of his writing, even six months later. The infrequent letters to London during his continued convalescence continued to indicate a willingness to go to Shandong if certain conditions were assured.²⁹

At this juncture, Richard again pondered what to do next. He knew he could never again work under a forced co-pastorate system as he had experienced in Shanxi. He knew he worked best autonomously, as by necessity he had done most of his first years in China, and that he was to use a different method in his missions work than most other missionaries. He could no longer in good conscience engage in the traditional methods but was called to reach the educated, employing educational and literary means. He believed if the leaders were converted to Christianity, then the welfare of the masses would be improved—intellectually, socially, politically, materially, morally, and spiritually.

26. Ibid., 213. Famine fever may refer to many diseases that spread in famine conditions, most often epidemic louse-borne typhus. Richard (dictated to Mary Richard) to Alfred Baynes, 23 July 1889, while convalescing in Yantai, called his relapse condition "nervous(?) Prostration" while Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 213, called it "malarial paralysis." This was the first letter written by Mary Richard as dictated by Richard during his extended convalescence, according to Soothill, *Timothy Richard of China*, 166.

27. Timothy Richard to Baynes, 4 October 1889, indicated that though he had "fully hoped to be able to move to [Jinan] about this time, he had been medically advised against it." He was continuing his literary work.

28. Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 213–14. That was the third time since 1885 that the BMS had refused to endorse Richard's scheme to establish a college for the education of the Chinese in Western learning.

29. Richard to Baynes, 18 March 1890.

During this time of recovery and reflection, Richard engaged in literary work, writing a series of articles serialized in the *Chinese Recorder* and later put in book form, exploring the various benefits of Christianity—material, intellectual, political, social, moral, and spiritual. He had been prompted to write these in response to a question posed by Viceroy Li—“But what is the good of Christianity?” He submitted for publication in Shandong a four-volume work with two other volumes in process.³⁰ Some of his evangelistic efforts bore fruit as well. In a March 1890 letter written by his wife, Richard disclosed that “a devout man” who had come to them as an inquirer some months before was baptized, and the first thing this literary man did after his baptism “was to write a Tract giving his reasons for having become a Christian.”³¹

In his autobiography, however, Richard wrote nothing about his activities during this time except to disclose that in May 1890 he presented the paper “The Relation of Christian Missions to the Chinese Government” to the Second General Missionary Conference in Shanghai (the first was held in 1877, but he had been unable to attend due to famine relief work).³² Richard “prophesied” in this paper that if the government did not do something to quell the negative propaganda coming out against Christians, then a new wave of persecution would occur. Some colleagues believed this too gloomy a picture, but nevertheless appointed a committee to study the matter and draft a memorial to present to the Throne. Richard and six others were appointed to this committee, but before a memorial could be drawn up, a number of violent outbreaks did occur in the Yangtze (Yangzi) River valley. Richard quickly went to Wuchang (Wuhan) to prevail upon Viceroy Zhang Zhidong, a former governor of Shanxi on whom Richard previously had a significant influence, to intervene, but Zhang received him coolly,

30. Richard to Baynes, 7 April 1890. Richard did not give the titles of these works, but probably one was the Chinese language book form of the series of English language articles appearing in the *Chinese Recorder*. See “The Historical Evidences of Christianity for China: the Material (ff’d by Intellectual, Political, Social, and Present) Benefits,” *Chinese Recorder* 21 (April, May, October 1890), 22 (January, April, May, October, November 1891).

31. Richard to Baynes, 18 March 1890. This literary man’s name is not given, but “[A]ll who know him consider him a choice man.” Neither this conversion nor the man’s tract is mentioned in Richard’s autobiography, which calls into question either Richard’s memory or, more likely, the sincerity of the man’s intentions for baptism. Richard’s habit was not to write details of events that caused him great disappointment; he did not hesitate to mention the name of one Japanese convert. Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 207, 213–16.

32. Richard, “Relation of Christian Missions,” 401–15.

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doing nothing. Richard then returned to Tianjin where he made the same request of Li Hongzhang, again with no evident action taken. Much later a memorial was drawn up and presented by this Committee, but violent acts continued to be perpetrated against Christians for many years.

In a letter following the May conference in Shanghai, Richard disclosed to Baynes that he “felt very loathe to continue to draw my salary to do work in which I was but partially supported.” In this same communication, Richard also wrote that he “must write a report of [his] state of health and of the important steps” he had just taken in consequence of his health. He again had been medically advised not to relocate to Shandong to take up the strenuous missionary work there. He then disclosed he had received and accepted an offer to become editor of an experimental Chinese newspaper in Tianjin beginning immediately, in July 1890. Viceroy Li and some personal friends had offered Richard the opportunity to become editor of a very influential daily paper in Chinese, called *The Times* (Shi Bao). “The appointment was most providential.” He stated it would enable him to engage in “one part of the work appointed me by the Society to do in [Jinan] and would reach four Provinces instead of one—and that including Shansi and Peking—this without any cost to the Society, not even my salary.”³³

EXPLORING A NEW PROFESSION

After prayer and consulting with missionaries, Richard was convinced that it would be better for him as a Christian to fill the editorship than a non-Christian. Furthermore, he probably was hopeful this would present an amicable resolution to the long-standing issues in Shanxi and Shandong. With the acceptance of this position, Richard left the fold of the BMS, something he had long resisted doing because of his deep commitment to serving as a Christian missionary, and one he hoped would be temporary. He stated this was to be only until his health would be “more fully restored and until the way be opened for fuller work in connection with the Society.”³⁴

33. Richard (dictated to Mary Richard), 26 June 1890; Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 215. The *Shi Bao* was a daily Chinese language newspaper started by Gustav Detring on behalf of Li Hongzhang; however, it was Li who “personally invited Timothy Richard in 1890 to become the editor.” Li knew the power of the press and often used the foreign and domestic press in China as well as America and Europe to promote reform. The *Shi Bao* “was represented to foreign advertisers as having an extensive circulation among high Chinese officials,” according to Britton, *The Chinese Periodical Press*, 77–78.

34. Richard (dictated to Mary Richard) to Baynes, 26 June 1890. With this statement,

Richard, in truth, as editor of *The Times* was offered a different kind of “pulpit” from which to preach “good news.” Through the agency of this newspaper, he had greater autonomy and freedom to proclaim his reformist ideas for the benefit of the Chinese. These were ideas that he held dear, yet few Chinese, even though in agreement, were at liberty to expound because of official conservatism. Most likely, Li was one of those officials under constraint and thus sought to exploit Richard’s zeal for reform at this time to blast open the logjam of Chinese conservatism.

For approximately one year, then, Richard wrote on many subjects bearing on reform in China, introducing not only new ideas for reform but also a new form of journalism. Rather than a dull recital of official decrees from the Court, Richard sought to educate his readership. He utilized comparative diagrams on various subjects—education, trade, railways, population, and the like for various nations—with the purpose in mind of moving Chinese officials toward a greater awareness of their country’s needs and of the means by which they might meet them and with what benefits. Richard believed “these diagrams proved probably one of the greatest forces in compelling intelligent Chinese to advocate reform.”³⁵ He also included information such as he had presented to the officials and scholars in Taiyuan during the early 1880s. When persecution broke out against missionaries, Richard “wrote 6 Leaders [headlined articles] upon the subject, some of them double the usual length, giving a full account of Missions work throughout the Empire and throughout the world besides giving frequent [shorter] reports of Mission work” in China. In a letter to the BMS in London, Richard clearly implied that his articles may have prompted the emperor to issue an edict calling upon all the viceroys and governors to suppress these riots immediately by punishing their leaders and protecting Christians.³⁶

His Japanese readers were most appreciative of the articles he wrote on the reforms taking place in Japan. When the heir apparent of Russia, later to become czar, was to come to China to break ground for the building of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, he first went to Japan but “encountered difficulties” during his visit there. Richard sought to allay the fears of the

Richard formally severed his position and salary with the BMS. He requested, however, that he be allowed to pay “for the education of my daughters through the Society. I shall pay the equivalent to *your* [emphasis mine] Mission in China.” Note his use of the non-inclusive possessive adjective “your” by which it can be inferred that he no longer considered himself a representative of the BMS.

35. Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 215.

36. Richard to Baynes, 4 July 1891, 3–4.

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Chinese as well as the Japanese by writing many articles for *The Times* about the protocol of royal visits among European countries as fostering peace and goodwill.³⁷

The newspaper gained the attention of Chinese elites as Richard had hoped. The statesman Zhang Zhidong “wired to me from Wuchang for copies to be sent direct to him. Moreover, 5 other Daily Papers conducted by Chinamen [*sic*]²—2 in Shanghai, 2 in Hong Kong and 1 in Canton—after the first month or two began to copy our Leaders in theirs.” By “the second moon of the year they copied among them no less than 15 of our Leaders!”³⁸ Within a year, however, just when the readership seemed to be expanding, the financial support for publishing the newspaper ceased and the newspaper folded. At the end of June 1891, with this unexpected development, Richard found himself once again at a crossroads.³⁹

Soon thereafter Richard was invited to become General Secretary of the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge among the Chinese (SDK, hereafter called the Christian Literary Society or CLS, its later name), an event he viewed as providential. With the untimely death

37. Mary Richard, *Diary*, 12 May 1891; Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 215.

38. Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 215; Richard to Baynes, 21 May 1891. Zhang's request from Wuchang indicates that Richard's readership went beyond the four-province area adjacent to Peking. Zhang continued to respect Richard's ideas as he had in the early 1880s when he was governor of Shanxi. Mary Richard to “Brother and Sister,” n.d. wrote that Richard had “started a ‘Weekly’ besides the Daily! It contains all the Leaders & the main News of the Dailies . . . The circulation of the Paper is gradually increasing. Someone suggested lately that the Reporters of news in the Provinces shd [*sic*] be paid in Papers instead of money . . . If he has not already adopted it, Timothy means to do so.”

39. Britton, *The Chinese Periodical Press*, 78, implied that Richard's departure to become secretary of the SDK hastened the suspension of the *Shi Bao*. Whereas Soothill, *Timothy Richard of China*, 170, claimed the newspaper lost its financial support, and that this antedated Richard's acceptance of the SDK position. Britton stated that the “*Shi Bao* was suspended when ‘The Chinese Times’ [a weekly English language newspaper] ended on the retirement of Alexander Michie [its editor, the *London Times* author and correspondent].” But his timing appears to have been in error. Not only was Soothill an “insider” as a close colleague of Richard, but also his view is supported by Mary Richard, *Diary*, 20 and 21 April, 30 June 1891: “Heard to-day that the Company [the large import-export firm Jardine & Mathison, Ltd.] have decided to give up the *Shi Bao* end of June . . . Planning to telegraph to Glover in Hong Kong asking what they sanction in the event the Co. giving up the Paper . . . They talk of giving compensation as they are giving up the Paper one year sooner than they engaged Mr. R. [Richard] for.” Richard had, in fact, a two-year agreement with the *Shi Bao*; moreover, it appears that Richard was considering reconnecting with the BMS to serve as a missionary after the *Shi Bao* editorship ended. Mary wrote in June, “Mr. R. joined us—free from his Editorship a missionary once more.”

in 1890 of his friend the Rev. Dr. A. G. Williamson, the position of general secretary had become vacant. The CLS Executive Committee and its President, the eminent Sir Robert Hart, head of the Imperial Chinese Customs Service, were very familiar with Richard's writings and apparently felt assured that he had both the sympathies and competencies equal to the task. Meanwhile, "[h]aving experienced the widespread influence of a newspaper, I [Richard] was convinced of the value of literary work in China."⁴⁰

The Society was in no financial position to offer a salary, but Richard had no other financial support. He accepted the position, provided that he receive certain assurances of support from the BMS, as his predecessor's mission board had done before.⁴¹ The BMS eventually did agree, perhaps reluctantly, to support Richard for three years.

By the time he relocated to Shanghai in 1891, Richard had endured almost five years in the refiner's crucible of conflict and uncertainty. The issues that had precipitated his departure from Shanxi in 1887 had continued to shadow him. His home committee had continued to insist that he engage in traditional missionary work, but, after almost twenty years in China, Richard believed he knew better what methods worked best. In any case, he believed that his talents, honed as editor of *The Times*, could best be used in the literary and educational arenas. Ironically, as general secretary of the CLS, with the support of the BMS, he could break free from their traditional approach to missions.

40. Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 217. Mary Richard, Diary, 4 June 1891, suggests there may have been some political pressure to close the *Shi Bao*; she wrote, "*Shi Bao* has greatly displeased Brennan[sic] our Eng. Consul." Richard's writings were generating an increasing national consciousness, and maybe the British consul was concerned that this would, in turn, destabilize the positions of the foreign powers in China.

41. Richard, *Forty-five Years*, 216–17. By the time this call to SDK was offered, the first BMS deputation had come to China with Dr. Richard Glover and the Rev. W. Morris as its members. Richard perceived that the BMS deputation "naturally assumed that the chief cause of my separation from the Mission lay in me, and proceeded as if to make peace between me and my fellow-missionaries." When the deputation met with the missionaries in Shandong, they found he had no differences with any of them. Another important factor at this juncture was the visit to China of Dr. Murdoch of the Christian Literature Society of India. He met with the BMS deputation, telling them his own CLS in Scotland supported him, and had also supported the late Dr. Williamson. He urged the BMS to do the same for Richard. At last, Dr. Murdoch and the deputation placed the matter before the BMS, which finally committed to support Richard for three years. Richard's autobiography is silent about Dr. Murdoch's intervention, but he included Murdoch's printed appeal to the BMS Home Committee two years later in the *Sixth Annual Report of the Society for the Diffusion of Christian & General Knowledge among the Chinese* (Shanghai, 1893).