Rethinking Mission in China:
James Hudson Taylor and Timothy Richard

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Reevaluation of the influences on Chinese mission strategies stimulated by these two great British Protestant missionaries to China is long overdue. The last straightforward comparison of their efforts dates from the 1950s, since when much has changed regarding the study of missions and mission theology, and in our understanding of the nature of nineteenth-century China. There is also a need to readdress some rather weighty questions related to their involvement in the broader project of British imperialism. The questions are weighty because the linkage of their missionary activities with specific British political interests is difficult to identify: they often joined other missionaries in criticizing British involvement in the opium trade and sometimes during their long years of missionary activity made a point of avoiding involvement with British officials residing in mainland China. On the other hand, Chinese Marxist critics regularly associate some of their missionary activities with spying and, in the case of Timothy Richard, decry his outright attempts to influence the attitudes of Qing dynasty officials as part of a larger imperialist agenda. Furthermore, being men of their age, they employed images and statistics both about Chinese people and their British homeland in their influential publications in ways that revealed variously their own particular religious sentiments, some unusual cultural interests, and certain political preferences.

This essay considers first why the images of these two men need to be reconsidered, focusing primarily on their roles as missionaries in China. It then

provides a general evaluation of how they presented the peoples of Qing China to their various audiences, illustrating these claims with specific examples from throughout their long careers of the ways they reiterated and reconceived the images of China and Chinese people during the late nineteenth century. Finally, it analyzes the correctives they made to their own missionary strategies and institutions in China in response to the rapidly changing conditions of the late Qing empire. This is done by focusing on the differences in their theological interpretations and practical mission strategies.

Ambiguous Images: Taylor and Richard as “Prototypes” of Late Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions in China

In creating and reflecting images of the vast Manchurian empire of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) and its peoples, James Hudson Taylor (Dai Desheng, 1832-1905) and Timothy Richard (Li Timotai, 1845-1919) were master image-makers. Their audiences, however, were often very different, almost as sharply distinct as the personalities they created for themselves within their respective literatures.

Taylor’s emphatic interest in his missionary publications was twofold. The first was to reach the English-speaking world with updated information on the cultural complexities and religious openness of Chinese and other peoples within the Qing dynasty. Then, and largely on the basis of the “needs” of “one quarter of the world’s population” in Qing China, he sought to awaken British Christianity to its own complacency and mediocrity in light of the standards of an evangelical faith. His form of Christian spirituality catalyzed immense transformations among missionary-minded English-speaking Christians in the 1880s and 1890s, forming patterns still visible in many missionary societies and in Chinese Protestant traditions to this day.2

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Much of the literature Timothy Richard produced or helped to publish, especially while secretary of the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge (Guangxue hui) in Shanghai (1891-1916), was in Chinese for elite Chinese audiences so that they could understand more completely the multiformity and global "benefits" of "true Christianity and true Christian civilization." Nevertheless, Richard did publish over forty articles in English in the influential missionary journal, the Chinese Recorder. In addition, he also produced unusual English translations of popular and scriptural Chinese Buddhist literature, reflecting an important missiological interest, which will be discussed later. Armed with an engaging intellect, clever rhetorical strategies, a practical spiritual vision, and a will to communicate with the highest ranks of officialdom in the Qing empire, Richard was an unusual avant-garde missionary figure. While he lived as a traditional missionary for over twenty years, he left his greatest impressions not among Christians in China or overseas, but on the political and cultural landscapes of the Manchurian empire, which struggled with debilitating foreign militarism and ultimately fatal internal rebellions. Convinced of the strategic importance of the support of the Manchurian and Chinese hierarchy, he broadened his missiological practice to include anything that would positively influence them toward Christianity and its representatives in China and abroad. 


3. Quoted from Timothy Richard's "Scheme for the general enlightenment of China," published in the *Chinese Recorder* (hereafter CR) for all Chinese missionaries, introducing the new plans of the SDGC, or *Guangxue hui: CR* 23 (1892): 131-32.

4. These articles in CR extend the whole length of Richard's career, the first published in 1876 and the last appearing in 1915, whereas Taylor only published two independent articles in CR throughout his long career. This difference must be considered in the light of Richard's long-standing concern for missionary literature and Taylor's weighty administrative responsibilities as director of the CIM.

Both Taylor and Richard have attracted academic attention as prototypes of nineteenth-century foreign missionaries of Protestant Christian persuasion. The Marxist critique of religions in contemporary China places most nineteenth-century missionary activities into politicized frames of reference, and so understandably in the standard Chinese text Missionaries and Modern China, there is relatively little about Taylor but much comment on Richard’s activities. In English language media these two missionaries have since the 1950s had their strategies placed in relative opposition, generally portraying Taylor as the “conservative” and Richard as the “liberal.” Despite occasional qualifications, the general effect has been to portray them as representing nearly diametrically opposed positions within Chinese missionary circles. This picture requires significant revision for both its theological suggestions and its general understanding of both late nineteenth-century Chinese missions and the nature of the Qing dynasty.

Though certain important theological differences are manifest in their approaches to Christian mission in the Qing empire, Taylor and Richard were both committed Nonconformist “evangelicals.” Both perceived their missionary task as having an ultimate goal in the eternal salvation made possible through the death and resurrection of Christ for all peoples, including Qing citizens of all kinds. Their separate kinds of Nonconformist orientations tended to make them less doctrinaire in theology and more ecumenical in practice, though Taylor was more attracted than Richard to the unashamed biblicism of the famous Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

8. The evangelical voice of Taylor is consistent throughout his writings, while in Richard’s Chinese works there was often an indirect affirmation. This has caused some confusion, because in his English articles statements confirming his evangelical commitments are not hard to locate. In fact, his evangelicalism cannot be questioned. In developing new approaches Richard often applied a larger intellectual scaffolding than most missionaries, regularly drawing from contemporary explorations in comparative religious studies, but his underlying theological commitments remained the same.
9. Richard’s resistance to dogmatic insistence on certain creeds was typical of the more radical kinds of evangelical “Independency”: see Rita Therese Johnson, “Timothy Richard’s Theory of Christian Missions to the Non-Christian World” (Ph.D. diss., Saint John’s University, 1966), pp. 63-68. Spurgeon’s sermons appeared early in China’s Millions, and numbers of the earliest CIM missionaries were sent out from his church, the Metropol-itan Tabernacle. It is significant that Spurgeon’s death in 1892 was also recorded in China’s Millions, something usually reserved only for missionaries and the closest supporters.
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ences in their approaches related more to theological reflections on the exigencies of the larger Chinese Empire at the end of the nineteenth century than to fundamentally distinct theological orientations. Although they differed in eschatological emphasis, something explored below, nevertheless the existential realities of Manchurian despotism in a period of foreign “semicolonial” impositions\(^\text{10}\) were at least as important as a stimulus for theological reflection as the differences in theological emphasis between the Baptist, Methodist, and Brethren traditions.\(^\text{11}\)

As to their distinctive missiological tendencies, it is more accurate to describe both men’s positions as correctives to the broader assumptions behind missionary institutions in the 1870s and 1880s. Although in another context their standpoints might appear directly opposed, these two missionaries decided on approaches to certain sectors of Qing society that for various reasons were being avoided by most other missionary societies. This owes much to both the more conservative tendencies of Sino-British foreign policy during the 1870s and the reactionary entrenchment of the Qing Foreign Affairs Bureau, the Zongli yamen, as a consequence of the complications caused by many “religious cases” (jiao’an).

Viewed from the angle of their target audiences in China, Taylor’s and Richard’s missionary strategies appeared simultaneously as correctives focusing on different spheres of Qing society rather than contradictory methods. Taylor confronted the restrictive tendencies of the Zongli yamen and British “minister plenipotentiary,” insisting that his missionary colleagues pursue active itinerancy across the entire Qing empire. By this means Taylor sought to counteract the natural inclination of most mission societies to withdraw into what he considered premature stages of institutionalization in their primary

\(^{10}\) The ideological term “semicolonial” (ban zhimindi de) has been one of those used by Chinese Marxists to designate the state of affairs in the later nineteenth century in the Qing empire.

\(^{11}\) Richard’s heritage in Baptist institutions is historically uncontroversial, but described only briefly in all the major accounts of his early life, and so should be more thoroughly researched. According to his own account, his earliest education was taken in a Congregational school, but his formative years were spent under the influences of Baptist ministers and teachers. Most accounts rely on Richard’s own bald characterizations of his training at Haverfordwest Theological College in Pembrokeshire (1865-69): Forty-Five Years in China: Reminiscences by Timothy Richard (New York, 1916), pp. 22-28. Taylor’s influences are a little more complex. Nurtured in a Methodist home, he was influenced greatly by certain Brethren communities in England during his first furlough. Earlier misunderstandings, particularly by scholars associating Taylor with the dispensational theology promoted by J. N. Darby, have been corrected by Broomhall, *HTCOC*, 3:447-53.
stations on mainland China's eastern coastline. Richard chose to counteract the assumption of many foreigners that Qing imperial officialdom was to a man antiforeign and unresponsive to any Christian work, an image largely supported by increased persecutions occurring during this period. While most Protestant missionaries pursued converts among the tens of millions of peasants, Richard focused on the religious leaders as well as the social elites, adjusting his literature and methods to match their interests and concerns. This, Richard believed, would ultimately replace inimical attitudes with amicable appreciation, leading ultimately to greater religious freedom and to many more conversions from all sectors of Qing society.

Complicating accounts of missionary activity during this period is a new recognition that the form of Manchurian despotism was more complex than some accounts have made it out to be. New research into Manchurian language sources confirms now that the Qing empire was a multietnic and expanding entity, even though it was brought to its knees by the militaristic imposition of foreign mercantile and cultural interests during the middle and late nineteenth century. Although at least 90 percent of the population of the Qing empire was of Han ethnic origin, other peoples were recognized and left un-Sinicized by the Manchurian leadership, including the Tibetans, the Mongolians, various Muslim ethnic groups, and many Western minorities particularly in Sichuan and Yunnan. It was this diversity of peoples that members of Taylor’s China Inland Mission (CIM) (Nei di hui) met face-to-face in their extensive penetration of the Chinese hinterland, an ethnic diversity that shaped the CIM’s missiological strategies and linguistic preparation, as well as the public images missionaries presented of them in the CIM’s organ, China’s Millions and Our Work among Them. Because Richard became strategically involved with broad ranges of Qing officialdom, he also could not

12. This is effectively described by Broomhall, HTCOC, vol. 6.
14. Bohr argues that Richard became completely convinced of this strategy after working with city, district, and provincial officials during famine relief operations in Shanxi. See Bohr, pp. 129-70, and a collection of Richard’s essays supporting this missiological claim, Conversion by the Million in China, 2 vols. (Shanghai, 1907).
16. This was the title for the first year; it was then shortened by Taylor’s decision simply to China’s Millions: Broomhall, HTCOC, 6:45. We use its more popular and shorter title.
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avoid the differences between Manchurian, Han, and Muslim leaders he met. Although the vast majority, if not all, of his literary efforts and interviews with them were carried on in Chinese, Richard engaged these political figures just as ethnic tensions were being politicized. His insight into these higher levels of Qing society affected not only his own strategies but his reports to the larger missionary communities within China and his representation of China to the English-speaking world. On the basis of these revised assumptions regarding Taylor’s and Richard’s foundational theological commitments, their differing roles as missionary leaders, and the newly recognized complexities of a multiethnic Qing empire facing unprecedented political threats from both foreign and internal opposition, a fuller and more precise evaluation of the missiological changes they brought about can be made.

Correctives to the Standard Assumptions of Missionary Bodies in the Late Qing Period

Both Taylor and Richard assumed traditional missionary roles as professional evangelists in Qing China, but faced somewhat different social conditions. Their responses to the Qing environments they encountered involved reshaping their own missionary roles as well as the institutions they helped create and develop — the CIM for Taylor, and for Richard the Society for the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge among the Chinese (SDCGK) and the innovative Shanxi University (1901-10). 17

Taylor landed in Shanghai as part of the third generation of Protestant missionaries in the early 1850s, during the more active years of the Taiping insurrection (Taiping Tianguo, 1851-64). Threats to invade Shanghai by Taiping troops caused instability in many areas, and at times persistent antiforeign attitudes due to the insurgents’ partial reliance on Protestant precedents in their religious literature and forms of worship. This limited the extent of itineration by even the boldest missionaries during this period, limits Taylor stretched as far as possible following the example of one of his earlier missionary heroes — the controversial Prussian missionary Karl Gützlaff (1803-51). In the early 1830s Gützlaff traveled along the eastern coastline on opium boats, exploring the feasibility of missionary activities in areas closed to for-

17. The common abbreviation for Richard’s Society in the contemporary literature was shortened even further to the SDK, but the emphasis we will place here on the differences between “Christian and General” knowledge as Richard developed them warrants the longer abbreviation.
eigners by the conservative Qing imperial policies. These restrictions had been loosened slightly under the Nanjing treaty of 1842, after the First Opium War, and were to be practically overruled by the controversial provisions of the Tianjin treaty of 1858. Certainly these special conditions for missionaries and Chinese Christians embedded in the details of military treaties related to British imperial interests were seen as perennial proof of British missionaries' "guilt by association" by many Chinese officials. Yet it was under these conditions that Taylor in the mid-1860s developed his vision for the CIM, and pressed the boldest of his missionary "agents" forward across the entire Qing empire to scout out possibilities for establishing indigenous churches and missionary stations in the vast hinterland.

Suffering from the incompetent administration of his sending mission during the mid-1850s, Taylor developed his own style of indigenizing "faith" mission strategy independent of their directions, ultimately leaving them to pursue his form of missionary life in 1858. Leaving China in 1860, just before the military conclusion of the Second Opium War was highlighted by Lord Elgin's infamous burning of the imperial Summer Palace, Taylor spent five years away in Britain. There he regained his failing health, strengthened and updated his professional skills as a medical doctor, and ultimately created the CIM. Under these conditions, we should emphasize, the CIM was consciously established as an alternative to the standard foreign mission structures of the day. Taylor himself worked as the CIM's general director until his partial retirement in 1900, leaving it completely in the hands of the next general secretary (Dixon Hoste, 1861-1946) in 1904, a year before he died.

Thirteen years younger than Taylor, Timothy Richard did not arrive and settle into his initial mission station in the city of Zhifu (Chefoo) in Shandong province until 1870, part of the fourth generation of Chinese missionaries. By this time the Zongli yamen had been working for a full decade under the new Tianjin treaty of 1858, and the problems of "religious cases" involving Catholic and Protestant missionaries had become an irritating inter-

18. For the general significance of Gützlaff's exploits and their important influence on the young Taylor, see Broomhall, HTCOC, vol. 1, esp. pp. 209-10, 227-28, 349-50. I am indebted to R. Gary Tiedemann for emphasizing this point.
21. Among the important differences of the CIM administrative structure was the requirement that the director of the mission live in China and direct operations from there as much as possible. As we shall see below, administrative changes occurred in the mid-1880s as the CIM grew in extent and complexity.
national reality. British foreign policy in Beijing (Peking) had already become less responsive to missionary requests for help in resolving conflicts with Qing citizens, particularly because of the knotty political problems they regularly engendered. By 1870 British foreign policy in Beijing had reverted to a defense of mercantile interests, and was once more less concerned with the “missionary question,” while the Zongli yamen also began a long-term ideological campaign against missionaries as part of the broader “barbarian question.” Ultimately a “Missionary Memorandum” written by representative Chinese missionaries was sent in 1869 to the British Parliament to counter biased political criticisms, but the missionary troubles of the 1860s left a negative legacy that deeply affected British and Qing foreign policy for the rest of the century. Consequently Richard faced opposition from Shandong officials immediately upon arrival, and so sought to develop means to regain their confidence so they would not hinder normal missionary work, either directly or indirectly. His own changed attitude toward the professional production of Chinese newspapers and translated literature in the late 1880s arose directly from these conditions. On the basis of his practical successes and the persuasiveness of his public arguments about these problems, Richard was invited to become the second secretary of the SDCGK in Shanghai in 1891. By this means he gained a position of immense influence within both Chinese missionary communities and the official structures of the Qing Chinese empire that lasted for the next twenty-five years.

Correctives to “Standard” Images of Qing China and Her Citizens

To interpret the influence of these two prolific and unusual writers on the public images of Qing China is a daunting task, owing to the amount and variety of literature involved. The public images necessarily include those writ-

22. Among the most outstanding of these conflicts were riots in Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, in August 1868 that directly involved Taylor himself. For accounts of the period from the angle of both Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries, as well as British and Qing foreign policy, see Broomhall, HTCOC, 4:376-402 and 5:77-226.


24. Forty-Five Years in China, passim.
ten in Chinese literature — this being a very significant dimension of Richard's work — making the task even more complex.25 As a consequence, what is offered below is only an initial attempt to grapple with the multidimensional character of these influences, in the hope that it will stimulate further interpretative study. Through the extremely influential missionary organ of the CIM, the monthly *China's Millions*, a kaleidoscope of Chinese scenes and cameos of other ethnic groups paraded into the homes and churches of an increasingly large international readership. It commenced publication in 1875 under Taylor's firm editorship, remaining one of his major projects as the CIM's general director until 1895.26 Besides the extensive work of *China's Millions*, Taylor produced several other books in English seminally formative of the missionary portrayal of Qing China. *China's Spiritual Need and Claims*, first published in 1865, reached its ninth edition in 1890. Further missiological reflections on the CIM's "occupation" of China were captured in *After Thirty Years* (1895), while more personal angles on this mission society's early efforts can be drawn from Taylor's autobiography, *A Retrospect*. Here attention will focus on the content of *China's Millions*.

Although *China's Millions* was not the first missionary magazine to publish lithographs and drawings reflecting aspects of China and Chinese people, it represented an enormous advance in technical quality and diversity of images.27 Because it commenced publication in 1875, the CIM staff were able to enhance the realism of their images owing to recent technological advances and the gradual development of techniques of photographic reproduction in

25. As far as I can discover, Taylor himself did not produce any manuscript or leaflet written in Chinese and published as a public document. That he spoke and even taught Chinese language to missionary candidates is well documented.

26. Taylor made all the final editorial decisions and contributed substantially to content and layout. He was also dependent on help in Britain, from his second wife, "Jennie" (Jane Elizabeth Taylor, 1843-1904), but especially the general secretary of the CIM in London, Benjamin Broomhall (1829-1911, general secretary 1878-95). This study refers only to the British edition, but a North American edition was also established in the 1890s that impacted that part of the English-speaking world. Broomhall, *HTCOC*, vol. 6.

27. Broomhall suggests that *China's Millions* was the first missionary magazine to employ steel engravings of images already published in the secular media, but this would be misleading if it meant there had been no previous pictorial representations in earlier missionary organs. For example, lithographic productions and sketches of China appeared in the *Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle* in the 1840s, and in the *Chinese Repository* (1832-51). The former was edited by John Morison (ca. 1785-1858), Congregational minister, a director of the London Missionary Society (LMS), and father-in-law of Chinese missionary-sinologist James Legge (1815-97). The latter was edited for the longest time by the American missionary Elijah C. Bridgman (1801-61), a resident of Guangzhou (Canton). See Broomhall, *HTCOC*, 6:45.
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print. These pictures included common street scenes, Chinese people in still and active poses, various places throughout the Qing empire encountered in missionary travels, and the more unusual images of tribal peoples in their normal and “Christian” attire. The pictures ranged across social classes, with images of common peasants, city dwellers, religious figures, and Qing officials. Nevertheless, these attempts to “mirror” reality were obviously limited by the preference of the artists and technicians for “still” images over those involving some form of action. Another dimension of technical “error” is evident to anyone who actually reads Chinese. The symbols mimicking Chinese characters on street signs and in temples were almost always completely illegible and incoherent; when intelligible, they were not always interpreted correctly (see fig. 4).

Images in the early volumes were sometimes drawn from the secular presses, particularly from the Graphic magazine, which reinforced Orientalized images of the “penurious” Chinese male and the enticingly attractive and submissive Chinese female (see fig. 5). Another source of images was John Thomson’s collection of Chinese pictures, first published in the early 1870s, including panoramas of cities, rivers, mountains, and numerous kinds of people. At some point these borrowed images were replaced by what we assume were the CIM’s own productions, tending toward “more realistic” portrayals of Qing citizens, male and female, of many ages and ethnic backgrounds. For a British public that had developed a taste for “up-to-date information” and “facts,” these pictures corrected many previously stereotyped (and less humane) caricatures of Chinese persons and others from the ethnic minorities. Details about the ethnic groups besides the majority Han people were new, and revealed the political complexities of the Qing empire as well as some of its underlying social tensions.

28. So, for example, there appeared in the 1877 volume (only the second annual volume in the series) a photograph of the “Members of the First General Conference of Missionaries in China” held in Shanghai in 1877. Under the picture was a graphic image numbering each of the missionaries in the photograph, Taylor being identified as #41. Richard was unable to attend, and so does not appear there. Only in the 1890s was it apparently more feasible technically and financially to reproduce the photographs in the regular issues of China’s Millions.

29. See John Thomson, China and Its People in Early Photographs (New York, 1982), a republication of his work of the early 1870s. Vol. I, pl. XIV shows a set of Qing soldiers that can also be found in China’s Millions.

30. Specific articles cataloged under “Tribes” and dealing with the Miao, Lolo, and “Kahchen” people groups appeared already in 1878, while later on in 1881 and 1885 articles on “Thibet” appeared occasionally as CIM “agents” initiated contacts with these people and prepared strategies for maintaining a mission station among them. Fairly quickly these highlighted items were submerged into the regular correspondence published from the writings of specific missionaries.
Figure 4. Chinese punishments — the pillory and the wooden collar. Here the scratchings that "represent" Chinese characters are in fact completely illegible, a few of the simplest among them being actually the reverse (written backwards!) of some characters. To an informed reader this can only manifest that the artist and the editors were unable (or unwilling) to render anything authentically Chinese on the signs decking the criminals. From China's Millions, 1886 annual edition, p. 27.
Figure 5. A street fortune-teller. This is only one of a number of sketches taken from the Graphic and published in early issues of China's Millions. Most continued this stereotypical representation of the Chinese male as a "stingy" person and the Chinese female as a "submissive beauty." From China's Millions, 1877, p. 25.
lar additions included maps of continental China, often including the routes of their young missionaries’ most extensive itineraries, all of which ultimately benefited the CIM’s public image.

From the start, *China’s Millions* frequently contained specific articles designated “For the Young,” discussing daily life from the angle of a Chinese child growing up in Qing society. While explanations of the standards of Chinese filial piety (*xiao*) appeared very early as positive examples of Chinese life, these discussions necessarily raised the more controversial problems associated with ancestral reverence and its associated familial rituals. Subsequently, more extensive and diverse discussions of Chinese habits and customs probably had an even larger influence on young readers. These articles included descriptions of the ubiquitous beggars, dogs, and other less appealing features of contemporary life in China, as well as details about the significance of different hair dressings worn by young children. These were presented in an attempt to reinforce the practical realities faced by missionaries and the common folk who were their neighbors. Sometimes the mundane was juxtaposed with the morose, for example, illustrations of baby girls’ hairstyles with discussions of infanticide. A detailed and systematic analysis of all the articles and missionary correspondence would certainly make possible a far more accurate assessment of the interplay of images, “factual” information, and the subjective interpretations of missionaries in differing circumstances.

Generally speaking, these CIM presentations of the lives and activities of Chinese and other people in the nineteenth century achieved two basic aims. First, the more human and culturally intelligible sides of Qing life were made accessible to non-Chinese readers. Additionally, and overlapping the descriptive elements of this literature, their “spiritual needs” were constantly underscored. For example, descriptions of opium users led quickly to questions about British mercantile involvement in the Indian and Chinese opium trade, the capitalistic evil it produced inside and outside China, the fatalities accompanying addiction, and the desperation of those who sought relief from

31. Such articles for “younger minds” ceased altogether from 1891.
32. For examples of filial piety, see *China’s Millions*, 1879, p. 22; 1882, p. 60.
34. Illustrated article by “Miss Johnston,” *China’s Millions*, 1889, p. 177.
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opium’s consequences. Pastor Xi Shengmo (“Pastor Hsi,” 1830-96) of Shanxi province was a prime example of the educated and successful scholar who became an opium addict and then needed spiritual liberation in order to overcome his terrible predicament.

In his English-language publications, Timothy Richard’s imaging of Chinese people and officials in the imperial bureaucracy was in some ways radically different from Taylor’s in China’s Millions. Although never denying the importance of normal missionary activities and itinerancy (which he also performed during his first twenty years in China), Richard was preoccupied with indigenous Chinese religious traditions, the problems of Christian persecution, and the use of translated literature as a means for breaking through the ingrained antiforeignism of many Qing bureaucrats, especially from 1890 to 1910.

Richard was open to religious dialogue in China across all traditional boundaries, and many of his most startling works related to his unusual views of Mahayana Buddhism (Dacheng Fojiiao). His early interest in this area was underscored by his translation into English of the popular Buddhist novel Xiyou ji (lit. “Records of a Western Journey”), which he rendered A Mission to Heaven. More significant was his “Christian” translation of Ashvagosha’s Dacheng qixin lun (The Mahayana Buddhist tradition’s doctrine on the awakening of faith), which he claimed first to have read in 1884, and then translated with the help of a Chinese convert to Buddhism, Mr. Yang Wenhui. Following contemporary comparative religion theories, Richard argued that the essential doctrines and principles of this form of Buddhism with its Babylonian roots were consonant with Christian teachings and worth further exploration. Hoping his studies might lead to a quicker evangelization of

37. The opium question was regularly featured in China’s Millions. Benjamin Broomhall, on the editorial staff, was an outstanding public critic of British complicity in the trade.


40. This strange and short-lived form of sinological Orientalism was also promoted by Joseph Edkins of the LMS and originated with the eccentric scholarship of Terrien de Lacouperie. A sinological Buddhist and self-proclaimed classical expert in London, Lacouperie produced a journal on Babylonian and Oriental themes, trying to link differing religious groups by philological connections.
Buddhists, Richard persisted in spite of public criticism by other missionaries, producing not only translations but also late in his life an evangelical appeal to Buddhists.  

When city riots and troubles encountered on missionary itineraries featured as “news” in China’s Millions, Taylor simply and earnestly requested prayer from interested Christian readers. Richard, however, worked on practical, preventive measures in addition to prayer. Among the chief causes of these terrible problems, Richard claimed, was genuine ignorance of “the true history of Christianity” among the elite, who often associated Protestant Christianity with the Taiping rebellion and assumed it would encourage similar insurrectionist movements. These fears were not allayed by missionary rhetoric that referred metaphorically to the missionary enterprise as “revolutionary.” This language was explicit in the 1869 “Missionary Memorandum,” and was reiterated by representative British missionary figures in subsequent decades.  

These troubles were also greatly exacerbated by missionaries’ general unwillingness to appeal to the British consulate for help, notwithstanding the treaty conditions. This owed as much to their Nonconformist attitudes toward government intervention in religious life, and to the protests by the Zongli yamen against Catholic and Protestant aggression, as it did to strategies to maintain their evangelistic tours inside China. Nevertheless, the avoidance of contact with British officials adds to the complexities in evaluating the “imperialistic complicity” of these missionaries. While Richard explained how this political quiescence caused suffering Chinese Christians great perplexity (when they sought their missionaries’ support and received only theological instruction to endure in love), he did not mention the inherent politi-


44. See n. 23 above. Another significant example of “revolutionary” missionary rhetoric is seen in James Legge, Confucianism in Relation to Christianity (London, 1877).
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cal dilemma it involved. Missionaries who reported these matters to foreign officials often brought about, in the end, greater political restrictions by the British government on its citizens resident in China. For those like the CIM director who were intent on itineration, this was a political control they did not want. 45 For his part, Richard by the mid-1880s became a determined advocate of the rule of law, promoting the development of better treaty laws, and in later years he urged governments to consider the establishment of an international standard of law, replacing previous precedents made inherently weak through aggressive militarism. 46

Richard's promotion of greater direct engagement with the “fickle” Qing officials by the general body of missionaries met widespread open criticism. He himself admitted that the process would take time, but many including Taylor and his CIM staff felt that time was against “China's millions” who faced personal destinies of “eternal condemnation” without the knowledge of the Christian gospel. 47 This salvific concern, rooted in expectancies of the imminent and physical return of Christ to rule on earth, imparted a particular urgency to Taylor's missiology. Its special eschatological drive put Taylor's theology in tension with most “culturally adaptive” approaches, which required more time and institutional stability for their success. This appeal was broadly accepted in Taylor's own day, stimulating a large response even from previously unenthusiastic university students, the most famous among these being the so-called Cambridge Seven. 48

When opposition grew to Richard's basic approach (including, for instance, his support for Western-style universities built upon Christian foundations), and it was rejected even by some of his younger Baptist colleagues in

45. While CIM members could approach local mandarins, Taylor forbade them to appeal to British officials in their areas, lest the latter resort to “gunboat” diplomacy: Broomhall, HTCOC, vol. 6.

46. For his own account of his connections with the peace movement, see Forty-Five Years in China, pp. 367-76.

47. Taylor saw in the issues raised by Richard the “Shansi (i.e., Shanxi) spirit,” defined by Broomhall as “a spirit of complaint and loss of conviction and purpose.” Ultimately, however, the two men's attitudes were less conflicting than complementary. Until the First World War, it was Taylor's emphatic commitment to evangelize that swayed most China missionaries, and it was Richard's strategic corrective in dealing straightforwardly with Qing officials that provided new impetus for Christian missions in the first decade of the twentieth century.

48. This premillennial eschatology is unduly downplayed by Broomhall, HTCOC. Cf. letters from Joseph S. Adams, an American Baptist missionary who initially joined the CIM, which point to this motivation as a primary reason for Taylor's emphasis on itinerant missionary work. See n. 55 below.
1888-89, he and his family moved away to Tianjin. While retaining his ties to the Baptist Missionary Society, he began a very different career in newspaper publications, devoting most of his time to communicating with public officials about the broadest aspects of "true Christian civilization." This was done in a distinctive manner, using graphs and statistical charts, which captured the imagination of the younger reformist-minded Confucian (Ruist) scholars of his day. Before their eyes Richard paraded "the facts" about the world in which they were inextricably involved. He employed many other literary images, but these charts became particularly famous and effective in promoting a critical approach to conditions in the Qing empire. On the basis of the essays he wrote to accompany these charts, Timothy Richard's strange-sounding foreign name, Li Timotai, became a Chinese household word.

Though these statistical charts may appear primitive now, at the time they provided revolutionary information for the normal Chinese reader. Zhongguo, the "Middle Country" non-Chinese have called China, was no longer in the "middle" of the world, a fact Matteo Ricci had also tried to convey to the Wanli emperor in the early 1600s. Yet while Ricci kept the name and position of China distinctly present on the world map, Richard in the 1890s left China as only part of Asia (Yazhou), one of the six continents in the "round earth" (di qiu). Further shocks awaited any parochially minded reader in maps and charts displaying the comparative enlargement of Chinese, Russian, and British dominions (see fig. 6, map 3) and the number of people belonging to each "country" (guo, see fig. 7). China is presented as having the largest population (380 million), "England" (Britain) being second with 256 million (patently false, since this number included the populations of all British colonial possessions), followed by Russia, the United States, France, and Germany.

Christianity's advantage was presented in a comparative chart relating the number of persons associated with each major religious tradition or "teaching" (jiao). "Christianity," used as a general term to encompass all the branches of religious tradition associated with Jesus Christ, is presented in

50. So popular were these charts that Richard published them independently, along with their original articles, in a separate Chinese edition: Shishi xinlun (New essays on the affairs of these days), 3 vols. (Shanghai, 1894).
51. This is notably the first map in the whole series of forty-five maps and statistical charts presented in Richard's Shishi xinlun. An original version of Ricci's map mentioned above is displayed in the Museum on Christianity at Soongsil University in Seoul, Korea.
Figure 6. Timothy Richard’s three maps of China and surrounding nations at various periods. The first map (upper right) shows (in white) the landmass of Ming dynasty China (fifteenth to mid-seventeenth century). The second (lower right) shows the increase in possessions by the Qing Manchurian rulers around 1650, mentioning besides the “18 provinces of China,” from r. to l., Manchuria, Mongolia, Xinjiang (“New Boundary Lands”), and Tibet. The third map is intended to represent the situation at the end of the nineteenth century, giving prominence to “Russian possessions” to the north of the “Great Qing” lands, and “English possessions” to the south.
Figure 7. “The Map of the World.” Notice on the upper hemisphere the images and characters for “Australia,” “Asia,” “Europe,” and “Africa.” Significantly for a Chinese audience in the late Qing dynasty, China is not independently identified.
the right-hand chart of figure 8 as the "teaching that saves the world" (qiushi jiao). It has the most numerous adherents (450 million), and is followed by the three Chinese religions (Ru Shi Dao, or "the scholars, the followers of Sakyamuni, and the followers of the Way/Dao") with 400 million, with subsequent references to Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. There followed charts displaying international statistics for the length of railroads, exports and imports, taxes collected at the national customs offices, the length of telegraph lines, and even the number of warships. When it is realized that this information came into the hands of Chinese citizens after their defeats by allied European and North American forces and when they were about to be humiliated by Japanese naval victories in 1894-95, it is possible to imagine the public shock these comparisons gave to a people used to considering themselves the strongest, most civilized country in the world.

Behind this information blitz was a singular motivation that Richard continued to repeat in both Chinese and English publications: citizens of the Qing dynasty were woefully ignorant of the world around them and therefore suffered the consequences of their ignorance. Among those consequences was their mistreatment of Chinese Christians, who were part of the largest religion in the world (according to the charts Richard produced, carefully citing his source materials under Chinese titles for Chinese readers to follow up). The influence of these basic ideas among reform-minded Chinese in the late 1890s is now well established. Nevertheless, positive recognition of Western civilization and of missionary roles in China was only publicly forthcoming after the extensive massacre of missionaries and Chinese Christians during

52. Jiao, translated "teaching" or religion, was later replaced by zongjiao, noted by Richard in A Dictionary of Philosophical Terms Chiefly from the Japanese (n.p.: Christian Literature Society, 1913), p. 55. It should be noted that the terms he employed for Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism were also older terms. The first is literally "the teachings of India," which is now rendered more commonly as "the religions of India." The second is a particularly sino-centric term, Huijiao, "the teachings of the Hui people," since Muslims were believed to be primarily associated in one ethnic group within China. In fact, this was not the case even in the nineteenth century, and though the term is still sometimes employed in contemporary Chinese language, the preferred term by Chinese Muslims is Yisilan jiao, or the "teaching of Islam." Youtai jiao, or "the teaching of the Jews," has undergone the expected transformation as a "religion" now, but reflects another sentiment that may have been transferred from Europe. The first term, You, is written with the "dog" radical, and so suggests an anti-Semitic meaning. Unfortunately, it is still the common reference term for Judaism, though there is some slight move among academics in religious studies to replace the dog radical with one for humans.

53. Wu Huili, "Zhongwen jizai zhong suo jian Weixin yundong qijian Li Timotai de huodong."
Figure 8. Timothy Richard's charts showing population and territorial extent of the major world religions. The right-hand chart indicates the "Number of People Belonging to Each Religion" (literally "Teaching") in the Five Continents," starting from the right with the "Teaching that Saves the World," followed by the three "Chinese religions" (Ruisim ["Confucianism"], Buddhism, Daoism), and then "Hinduism," "Teaching of the Hui People (Islam)," and "Judaism." The chart on the left boasts the landmass covered by each of the religions' adherents within the same five continents, giving the most to the "Teaching that Saves the World" (over 40 million square miles), followed by Ruisim ("only" 6 million square miles), Islam (5 million square miles), and Buddhism (less than 2 million square miles).
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the so-called Boxer movement of 1900 (known in Chinese as the Society of Righteousness and Harmony, Yihe tuan). 54

Redirecting Chinese Missions: Successes, Justifications, and Unforeseen Complications

It has been argued above that Taylor and Richard were Protestant missionaries of the evangelical stripe, working out correctives to the standard missionary approaches employed in late nineteenth-century China through their own activities and institutions, which became intimately associated with their own names (in Chinese as well as English). Taylor’s resistance to institutionalization by insisting on missionary “itinerations” throughout the Qing empire reinvigorated the evangelical vision in numerous missions, so that not only the CIM but many other missions had representatives throughout China by 1900. Richard’s practical awareness of the ideological politics behind resistance to missionaries brought him into the limelight as a new “sage from the West,” who had come to enlighten Chinese ignorance and aid the empire’s entry into the twentieth century as an informed and modernizing member of a still inchoate international “community.” Both men’s visions successfully reshaped patterns of normal missionary activity well into the first decades of Republican China.

However, we should be careful not to overstate the nature of these adaptations. Although Taylor was a firm advocate of the primacy of itinerant preaching, this strategy developed within a multiform institutional framework that the CIM manifestly supported. Itinerant preaching by missionaries, unsupported by gunboats but trusting in the “faithfulness of God,” was Taylor’s way of testing the reliability of the Opium War treaty conditions and proving that some of the common people within the Qing empire were open to the Christian message. However, Taylor’s premillennial anticipation of the return of Christ to earth did not keep him from planning institutionalized support for the growing number of mission stations under his ultimate supervision. Itinerancy, even for Taylor and the CIM, was only the avant-garde of the missionary enterprise. Once a station was established, other, more standard modes of missionary activity would naturally begin to take place. 55

54. Documentation of this problem is provided in Paul A. Cohen, History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth (New York, 1997).

55. An American Baptist missionary, Joseph S. Adams, previously a CIM member until 1882, complained that Taylor tried to hand these stations over to “untrained native preachers” much too quickly. He cited Taylor’s explicit motive as the “near appearance of
This was demonstrated in 1880 when the CIM initiated its first medical missionaries, and established its famous school for missionary and other children at Zhifu ("the Chefoo School"), while also sending the first women, married and single, into the Chinese hinterland to do their own style of missionary "women's work." 56

Itinerant missionaries also did more than street preaching, although this may sometimes be overlooked. Taylor himself was a trained medical doctor, and whenever he and others traveled, they carried not only medical supplies but also tracts, books, and gospel posters to sell and use along the way, in both roadside inns and cities where they encountered inquirers and established new stations. Richard himself was one of the first to recognize the distinctive role during the famine relief projects of the late 1870s of CIM missionaries, including Taylor's own wife, Jennie, who helped set up orphanages for needy children. Schools for Chinese children, both boys and girls, were of long-standing interest at CIM stations. Special medical work to relieve addicts of their reliance on opium also became a standard and successful element of the regular CIM activity, sustained principally by the charismatic leadership of Pastor Xi Shengmo. Clearly the CIM was not only an itinerant missionary body; it also supported other creative activities and many more mundane activities under its organizational umbrella.

Similarly, Richard's literary work did not eclipse his abiding interest in the missionary calling to "preach the gospel." In his famous set of essays, Historical Evidences of Christianity for China, he included pieces describing the material, intellectual, political, social, moral, spiritual, and present benefits Christianity offered to the Qing empire. Significantly, he wrote his longest pieces on the spiritual and political aspects. 57 Not intending to replace tradi-

the Lord" and "His personal reign on earth" (Baptist Missions archives, Archive for the Study of Christianity in China, Hong Kong Baptist University; Adams to Cushing, Rangoon, Burma, 3 December 1882). Nevertheless, this was a period of the greatest adventurous itineration by CIM members into "unreached" areas. However much Taylor emphasized itineration and localization, the greater institutionalization process still become part of the normal strategy following the bolder acts of itinerancy. I must thank my colleague, Roger Callaway, for this information.

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tional missionary activities by literature campaigns, Richard argued forcefully for a mixed and balanced approach taking account of the changing political and social complexities of the Qing empire. The problem in his mind was that the importance of Christian and other general literature about the "true Christian civilization," including the quality and precision of its messages, had been generally underrated. His arguments for "how a few men may make a million converts" manifested his vision for this kind of literature, and his approach was largely vindicated by its effects both before and after the Reform Movement of 1898. One of the very practical results of this literary appeal to true Christian civilization after the Boxer Rebellion was the use of indemnity funds to establish a "Western"-style university in Shanxi for Chinese civil service graduates. Although this visionary educational experiment did not survive the revolution of 1911, it is important to note that its curriculum was to be bicultural, even while most, if not all, of its foreign teachers were British nationals.

The theological justifications utilized by both men nevertheless manifested very different ways of approaching missionary work. These justifications led to important practical differences, which put Taylor and Richard on opposite sides of some very significant issues within Chinese missions. In part, these justifications reflected their individual personalities: Taylor was a reserved man attracted to an ascetic lifestyle and the mystical confirmation of experienced fellowship with Christ; Richard was more practical, driven by detailed plans for the total renovation of the Chinese people under a broad vision of the kingdom of God in Christ. These tendencies received explicit theological justifications in the literature both men published, reflecting what are still contentious problems in the theology of missions to this day.

Shaped by Methodist disciplines and Brethren piety, Taylor appears as a "man of one book." His reading of the Bible was neither narrow nor doctrinaire, but was a reading meditatively absorbed and expressed in terms of "fel-

1891): 443-51. These were later collated in a single volume under the main title by Richard, Historical Evidences of Christianity for China (Shanghai, 1895), and were also translated into Chinese.

58. Timothy Richard, "How a Few Men May Make a Million Converts," CR 32, no. 6 (June 1901): 267-80. His mention in the abstract preceding this article of "this swarming yellow race" shows him using the normal Orientalizations of the day, albeit in this case one that Chinese people used of themselves. Cf. the development of this theme more broadly in Conversion by the Million, esp. vol. 1.

59. Forty-Five Years in China, pp. 299-310. How much this represented a cultural arm of British imperialistic policy would require a much more detailed study of this institution than we can give here.
lowship with Christ" as the basic form of Christian spiritual life.60 Persuaded of "the mystical union of Christ and the believer," Taylor made the passages of the Christian Bible take on new spiritual meaning for thousands who heard him speak about the "living Christ," "God's faithfulness," and China's preeminent need.61 This form of spiritual life had a practical implication for reaching "China's millions." Jesus Christ, the "Incarnate Word of God," joined human beings in their most basic needs, and so the missionary should do this as well. When the apostle Paul sought to extrapolate this truth into missionary activities among the non-Jewish peoples, Taylor emphasized, he only once approached "the learned on their own grounds" (Acts 17, in addressing the Athenian citizens on Mars Hill), but became convinced of "the failure of that method" and so "abandoned it." The "Trinitarian God" would honor the faithful witness of anyone who knew nothing other than "JESUS CHRIST, and Him crucified" among the Chinese. When this kind of justification was strengthened by an eschatological anticipation of Christ's early return, mission strategy ended up emphasizing "practice" rather than "theory" or "study."62 To pursue an intellectual approach was for Taylor a missionary diversion, a tried and failed method manifested for him in both the Delegates' Version of the Chinese Bible (1852-56) with its "intellectual style" and the "Shanxi spirit" he identified with Richard's approach. Ultimately, Taylor's ministerial vision rested with common people uninfluenced by these intellectual trends.63

One way to characterize these differences is to identify Taylor's approach as a "minimalist" and Richard's as a "maximalist" missionary strategy.64 Remaining institutionally and theologically aloof from doctrinaire positions, Taylor took evangelism as the preeminent task of missionaries, understanding that to mean "the presentation of the gospel" without paying special attention to the complications of the Qing cultural contexts in which his CIM representatives moved. For his part, Richard saw the need to address elite members of the Chinese populace with the Christian gospel in its broadest

64. I am indebted to Professor Andrew Walls for this terminology.
sense, revealing the implications of the creator God as well as a cross-centered theology of salvation. For Richard it was necessary to address questions about comparisons between religions, the significance and impact of scientific knowledge, and the political benefits of reform, because these were maximalist implications drawn from his theological foundation.

Drawn toward a more “practical” theology of missions, Richard translated several practical Christian manuals into Chinese for Chinese Christians and seekers. In addition, he found precedents for his form of missionary activity in Jesus’ teachings in the Sermon of the Mount (Matt. 5–7). He saw Jesus as arguing for a “more excellent way,” offering something “surpassing the past,” not by rejecting it or destroying past developments but by fulfilling them. Richard had been deeply influenced by Edward Irving’s famous sermon before the LMS of 1824 on similar themes, but he developed the implications of these biblical teachings in his own distinctive manner. Summarizing the practical implications of this point of view for Chinese missionaries, Richard argued as follows:

My object in writing this is to ascertain who are prepared to say, — “we will guard against the insidious but wicked habit of running down the Chinese, we will give them fair play, we will make ourselves acquainted with all they value highest, and will show them higher knowledge in every branch of education; we are prepared to undergo greater self-sacrifice, we will not expect partial verdicts because we are foreigners; we will exhibit a higher faith and greater devotion. In a word, we shall take the Sermon on the Mount as our text, and for [our] motto, that we have not come to destroy but to fulfill; not to expect to be considered worthy of the kingdom of Heaven except we exceed the best in China, endeavouring to be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect; looking to the Chinese for support rather than to our over-partial friends at home; and may our blessed Father baptize us with the spirit of fire until we see all the land prostrate before Him.”

65. E.g., Richard translated Jeremy Taylor’s Holy Living, reflecting his practical concern to provide Chinese believers with specific directions toward a sanctified Christian experience: see Richard, Tiandao fenjcheng (Different lessons about the heavenly way) (Shanghai, ca. 1875).

66. Edward Irving, Missionaries after the Apostolic School (London, 1824), based on Matt. 10:11. There Jesus urged his disciples to look out for “worthy” people wherever they went, which Richard interpreted to mean those most educated and religiously involved.

Here was the crux of the matter, which put Taylor and Richard on opposite sides regarding the nature of ancestral rites and, almost certainly, on the tricky question about the appropriate Chinese words for the biblical terms "God," "Spirit/spirit" (divine and human), and "spirits." In the 1890 General Conference of Chinese Missionaries, the American W. A. P. Martin argued that ancestral rites were not outright worship, and so should be treated with leniency, not as unmitigated idolatry. While Richard and another American missionary, Gilbert Reid, who also targeted the Chinese elite, agreed with Martin, the vast majority followed Taylor in opposing this position as theologically incorrect and practically divisive. In his defense Richard drew attention to problems raised by Martin’s paper inherent in its use of the term "worship," and pointed to the still greater difficulty that if ancestors were referred to as shen, or "spirits" — the term also used by many “low church” missionaries for “God” in the Hebrew Scriptures and New Testament — then to "worship" or "reverence" these shen would be tantamount to idolatry.

Richard’s and Taylor’s handling of this ticklish question illustrates one of the unaddressed problems inherent in their missiological approaches. In his Chinese writings Richard constantly used the Ruist term taken from Ruist canonical literature for “God,” that is, shangdi. The “Holy Spirit” would then be designated by the words shengshen, taking the second term to refer only to spirits and not to God. How Taylor answered this problem is unclear, because we currently know of no Chinese tract or materials he wrote and published. Nevertheless, R. H. Mathews’s Chinese-English Dictionary (1931), prepared by one of the best CIM missionary-sinologists, distinctly supports readings that prefer the word shen as the rendering for “God” and the alternative shengling for “the Holy Spirit.” If Mathews’s usage indicates a general position held by Taylor himself (which may not be the case), it would encourage further doubts as to the wisdom of trying to avoid “intellectual” approaches to Chinese people and others using Chinese language as their basic medium.


69. Mathews avoids the use of shangdi for “God” except in a very few circumstances, generally rendering the term as “the Supreme.” The term shen, on the other hand, is generally referred to as “god” (not “God”) or “spirits,” though the phrase shengling is rendered “the divine nature, Godhead.” The key interpretative point here comes in his choice for the “Holy Spirit,” where he does not even employ the term Richard uses (shengshen) and only presents the term shengling as appropriate. Cf. R. H. Mathews, Chinese-English Dictionary, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), under ling (p. 586), shang (pp. 779-81), shen (pp. 790-92), and sheng (p. 800).
If the literature carried by CIM missionaries primarily used shen for “God” and shengling for the “Holy Spirit,” they would regularly have faced the practical problem that their Christian message logically appeared to oppose any form of ritual act of reverence toward another named spirit or shen. This is consistent with Taylor’s adamant opposition to “ancestral rites” in 1890, and would also explain why Richard, who, much like his predecessor James Legge (1815-97), preferred the Ruist classical term for “God,” did not feel that these rites were inherently idolatrous. Although the arguments in 1890 and at other times justifiably dealt with much more than this terminological problem, both usages provided the basis for a particular way of embodying the message of Chinese Christianity. Both terms for “God” are now used in biblical translations among Chinese Protestants, and almost all have followed Taylor in destroying their ancestral plaques on becoming Christians. Whether this also explains the relatively small percentage of Chinese responding to the Christian message during the last two hundred years, notwithstanding rapid growth during the past fifty, is an important practical question with some very significant theological implications.

Nevertheless, Richard’s open-ended approach to various religious and political leaders led to anomalous results. As seen above, his interpretative renderings of various Mahayana Buddhist texts have been fundamentally rejected by contemporary Buddhist translators. In addition, the reformer Richard mentioned who personally expressed his belief in the “Fatherhood of God” from reading Richard’s Chinese literature, Kang Youwei (1858-1927), was ultimately as liberal in his reading of Christian doctrines as Richard was in rendering Buddhist ideas. Kang was so inconsistent and unaware of certain basic Christian teachings that his commentaries contain many errors. Although Kang himself tended toward a kind of theism late in life, the primary tendency of his thought was shaped by Buddhism, and his most important disciple, Liang Qichao (1873-1929), who worked as personal secretary to Richard in Beijing in 1895, later became a well-known Buddhist advocate. Consequently, it seems that Richard’s open approach left other kinds of religious commitments open as well, and so ironically may have been more hindrance than help toward his ultimate goal of Christian witness leading to personal conversion.71

In conclusion, the further question remains: How much during their long careers did Taylor and Richard participate in the main trends of British imperial expansion? It is clear that their shared Nonconformist and evangelical theology brought them into conflict with both British and Qing officials, even though Richard was far more successful in winning some Qing officials to his way of viewing China and the modern world. Although neither man could be called an advocate of British imperialist policies, both represented institutions that Chinese officials regularly associated with those policies. Ironically, Taylor’s minimalist missionary strategy probably promoted more confrontation between missionaries and Chinese officials because of the missionaries’ inadequate sensitivity to Chinese everyday culture and elitist political values, while Richard’s more aggressive approach to China’s elites earned him the right to explain his view of “true Christian civilization” and predisposed some Qing officials toward a selective acceptance of Christian claims. Both men and the institutions they represented were compromised by the abiding presence of the “unequal treaties,” which gave special privileges to missionaries and Christian converts, and both helped create a vision of China and her people that shaped the ways many in the British and Qing empires saw their worlds. The price for these perceived points of complicity with British imperialism was the loss of lives during periods of religious turmoil, notably the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. Both nevertheless lived to see the enlargement of the institutions they established by their own distinctive missionary strategies.