

# RICHARD, Timothy

Lǐ tímótài 李提摩太

1845–1919 *Welsh missionary, educator, and reformist*

**Timothy Richard was a Welsh Baptist missionary who laid the groundwork for the rise of the Chinese Republic through his articles in the newspaper, *Wan Guo Gong Bao*, in which he detailed methods that would lead to economic, legal, and cultural reform.**

**S**till considered one of the most influential foreigners in China, Reverend Timothy Richard was a missionary, educator, writer, publisher, and reformist. Indeed, his efforts established a viable education system in which Western sciences and the humanities were stressed within the borders of China; and his writings awoke the newer generation to the potentials of a life unbounded by tradition. This new spirit of reform and change enabled the eventual establishment of the Republic of China, with its break from an age-old imperial system of government.

Born in the small village of Ffaldybrennin in South Wales, Richard was not content to follow in the footsteps of his family and take up farming. Working at various jobs, he earned enough money to get an education and to become a teacher. But this did not satisfy him, and he realized that his true calling lay in mission work. At the age of twenty he entered the Haverfordwest Theological College and became a Baptist minister. While there, he decided to become a missionary in China.

In 1870, sponsored by the Baptist Missionary Society, Richard arrived in the coastal town of Yantai, Shandong

Province, where he spent five years with other missionaries. He soon came to criticize their methods of preaching in public places and advocated instead the emphasis of education along with the tenets of the Christian faith, for he believed that missionary work needed to go hand-in-hand with education and reform. Before long, he adopted Chinese dress and moved further inland, where he handed out Christian and educational literature that he himself had written and provided whatever medical care he could. This too didn't yield enough results for Richard; he realized that his efforts were best directed at the men in power—the scholar-officials—the very backbone of imperial China.

When the great famine of 1876 hit northern China (in which some 13 million people died), Richard immersed himself in relief efforts. But all that he did was vitiated by the scholar-officials, who cared more about personal agendas than aiding their own people. Thus Richard realized that China's greatest need was for Western-style education, as well as Western philosophical principles, which could be used to end human suffering. As a result, he began to advocate sweeping changes at the governmental and institutional levels, by way of his articles in the newspaper *Wan Guo Gong Bao*, or *The Review of the Times*, which was published, by another missionary, Young John Alen, from 1868 to 1904, and wherein topics such as the establishment of a just government, the necessity of universal education, and the elimination of feudal practices were discussed. Such a message found an eager audience among the younger generation, which began to follow his views.

1900

Richard's opinions were not met with universal approval. His fellow missionaries thought his approach untrustworthy. This led to conflict, but Richard held firm to his belief that what China most needed was Western-style education and Western ideas, such as humanism. In 1891 the Baptist Missionary Society appointed him to the Society of the Diffusion of Christian and General Knowledge among the Chinese, which in a few years time became the Christian Literature Society. It was during these latter years that he was able to do the kind of work he had always sought to do in China—spread Western-style education to as broad a segment of the population as possible; he hoped that such an educational program would eventually lead to reform. And perhaps as a result of his efforts, the years that followed brought the Chinese national reform movement of 1897, the Boxer Rebellion (1899–1900), and, finally, the Republican Revolution of 1911; all three forever changed China.

Richard only returned to England in 1915 when his health began to fail him, and he settled in London, where in died in 1919.

**Nirmal DASS**

## Further Reading

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- Garnier, A. J. (1945). *A maker of modern China*. London: Carey Press.
- Richard, T. (1916). *Forty-five years in China: Reminiscences*. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company.
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- Williamson, H. R. (1957). *British Baptists in China*. London: Carey Kingsgate Press.



**Photo of Timothy Richard at the age of 40. Richard believed that missionary work went hand-in-hand with education and reform. After several years in the company of other Christian missionaries, he moved further inland, where he handed out Christian and educational literature that he himself had written. He provided whatever medical care he could for the people he served. When the great famine of 1876 hit northern China (in which some 13 million people died), Richard immersed himself in relief efforts. SOURCE: RICHARD, TIMOTHY D.D. (1916) FORTY FIVE YEARS IN CHINA; REMINISCENCES BY TIMOTHY RICHARD D.D. NEW YORK: FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY.**