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God of Our Fathers in A Mother's Realm:
Christianizing the Home and Indigenizing Protestantism in China, 1907-1938

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

in

History

by

Amy Roxanne Merrill O'Keefe

Committee in charge:

Professor Paul G. Pickowicz, Chair
Professor Joseph W. Esherick, Co-Chair
Professor Kathryn Edgerton-Tarpley
Professor Richard Madsen
Professor Sarah Schneewind
Professor Weijing Lu

2017

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The Dissertation of Amy Roxanne Merrill O’Keefe is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

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Co-Chair

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2017

DEDICATION

I gratefully dedicate this dissertation to my parents

Hyde McCune Merrill

and

Roxanne Reid Merrill (1943-2013)

who do that title proud.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCC	Church of Christ in China
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CLS	Christian Literature Society (Guangxuehui 廣學會)
CLW	Committee on Life and Work of the Churches
HDSXY	Huadong Shenxueyuan (华东神学院 East China Theological Seminary)
IMC	International Missionary Council
NCC	National Christian Council of China
NCCRE	National Committee for Christian Religious Education
PRC	People’s Republic of China
SLDD	Shanghai Library Digital Database
SMA	Shanghai Municipal Archives
SMC	Shanghai Municipal Council
YMCA	Young Men’s Christian Association
YWCA	Young Women’s Christian Association
ZQJX	Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui (中華全國基督教協進會 NCC)

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"Walking the Enlightened Path: Wang Mingdao's Road to Independent Christianity under Japanese Occupation." In Joseph W. Esherick and Matthew Combs, eds. *1943: China at the Crossroads.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015.

"Zou guangming zhi lu: Wang Mingdao zai lunxianqu de duli jiaohui" 走光明之路：王明道在沦陷区的独立教会, in Joseph Esherick and Matthew Combs, eds. *1943: Zhongguo zai shizi lukou* 1943：中国在十字路口. Beijing: shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe 社会科学文献出版社 , 2016. (Chinese translation of "Walking the Enlightened Path;" a second translation is underway for publication in Hong Kong in 2017.)

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

God of Our Fathers in A Mother's Realm:
Christianizing the Home and Indigenizing Protestantism in China, 1907-1938

by

Amy Roxanne Merrill O'Keefe

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, San Diego, 2017

Professor Paul Pickowicz, Chair
Professor Joseph Esherick, Co-Chair

In the early twentieth century, family reform became a matter of national importance in China. This dissertation addresses a Protestant Christian movement to "Christianize the home," which sought to reform Chinese society and indigenize Christianity. Chapter one discusses the formation of the Christianize the Home Committee of the National Christian Council of China (NCC). As part of a transnational organization, the Home Committee responded to both Chinese and American culture and beliefs. This responsiveness afforded an opportunity for women's leadership, and those in the Home Committee maximized upon that opportunity between 1922 and 1938. In

chapter two, I analyze publications from missionaries and Chinese Christians about ancestor worship. Their debate led some to reject evolutionary hierarchies of civilizations and instead parse the good from the bad in Chinese and Western cultures, trying to save both Chinese culture and Christianity in a modernizing milieu threatening to both. My third chapter shows how the idea of fulfillment theory became widespread. This idea that divine inspiration had shaped non-Christian religions led many to consider the unique strengths that Chinese culture could contribute to world Christianity.

In chapter four, I examine practical approaches to reconciling filial piety with Christianity and a competing vision of family spirituality that came from the United States. In the fifth chapter, I examine model Christian families in two pieces of fiction published in 1930s China. In both, women's education and service within and outside of the home builds the home's spiritual power. Both emphasize the agency of children, and both show a partially extended family in which filial piety is reflected.

That the Home Committee's visions of the Christianized home included conservative elements like respect for the family structure, affirmation of filial piety, and a tempered patriarchy helped it to be accessible and to resonate with treasured Chinese family values. The expansive, flexible ideal of the Christian home made it a place of creative power where character is formed and where women lead, a place characterized by improvement. This progressive institution was suited to weather the storms of the twentieth century and it contributed to Christianity's success in China.

Introduction

This dissertation focuses on early twentieth-century Protestant discussions of family spirituality as a case study of Chinese-Western cultural hybridity and accommodation. I examine debates about ancestor worship, the American ideal of the "family altar" and its translation into family worship *(jiating libai)* in China, and visions of spiritually powerful and empowering Christian homes that developed in China by the mid-1930s.

My study centers on the National Christian Council of China (NCC), the body that oversaw the Christianize the Home movement. The NCC was a coordinating council created with the mandate of equal Chinese and Western leadership, a hub of transnational cooperation with an explicit goal of indigenizing Christianity. One thesis of my work is that the institutional changes and campaigns that the NCC undertook in response to rising Chinese anti-imperialist nationalism show it to have been an evolving institution and community. This dissertation thus provides a corrective to historical narratives that describe a moribund missionary movement.

The transnational community of which the NCC was a locus sought solutions to the problems of cultural imperialism. My research shows that in the course of their debates about ancestor worship, they found a theological mechanism that opened the door for a vision of culturally responsive world Christianity. Partial dissociation of culture from religious teaching aided this vision, allowing many to leave behind assumptions of Western superiority. People who did not assume Western culture and Christianity to be

the same thing could embrace aspects of various cultures for their different contributions to Christianity.

Western ideals of a Christian home with power to uplift society mapped and adjusted nicely onto Chinese models of home as a center of social morality and state order. My research shows that by the 1930s, writers expected that Christian homes would exert influence on society and state through social reform and institution-building. They envisioned women as actors and activists extending the home's influence outside its walls. The 1930s models for Christian families taught parents to raise children with habits of service, individual agency, and participation. Christian family reformers also taught filial piety, the crowning virtue of Confucian family ethics, but in Christian homes, filial piety was tempered by priorities like hygiene, frugality, and the needs and rights of children. Family worship played an important role in the home as an act of spiritual centering, bringing order and reverence through each family member's participation.

The NCC Christianize the Home Committee was transnational both in the composition of its leadership and the blending of cultures produced in its publications. The Home Committee's responsiveness to cultural pressures made it a transformatively conservative movement. It promoted a modified patriarchy that maintained aspects of the Confucian family structure but attempted to correct for the problems identified by family reformers. The movement also created an ecclesiastical space for expansive female leadership; the catch-all nature of the home movement meant that female Christian leaders could reasonably assert some authority in a number of arenas of both social and spiritual work. Female leaders' authority was amplified by the dual local and national structure of the movement. The national nature of the movement and its importance in the

NCC provided legitimizing force on a local level, while the breadth of its contacts in different locales and the importance of family in Chinese culture and contemporary debates underlined the Committee's importance to the NCC.

Focus and Methodology

My approach to the Christianize the Home Movement is shaped by my archival material. The Home Movement I describe here is primarily an NCC project, and the majority of my written sources come from that body. The NCC itself is a subject of great interest to me because of its ecumenical and transnational stance among church and mission groups. The literature on Chinese Christianity often brings up, but rarely if ever examines the NCC. Daniel Bays' *A New History of Christianity in China* provides a nice, if very brief, overview of the NCC's formation and goals; Wallace Merwin's study of the Church of Christ in China refers occasionally to the NCC, which was formed at roughly the same time, with similar goals, and within the same community; Brian Stanley examines the World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh, which was the precursor to the National Christian Councils. He mentions the National Christian Council of China as one of Edinburgh's legacies but does not examine it in any depth.[1]

Through months spent reading and transcribing many of its meeting minutes, I developed a familiarity with the NCC as an organization that had its own ethic and ecumenical identity. I chose to foreground the NCC in my study in part out of a desire to

[1] Daniel Bays, *A New History of Christianity in China* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012); Wallace Merwin, *Adventures in Unity: The Church of Christ in China* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974); Brian Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2009).

explore and examine what this group's identity meant to leaders working within it, who were Chinese and Western, male and female, and who came to the NCC from various denominations. My focus on shared identity and purpose in the NCC led me to deemphasize denominational divisions in my study. Leaders of the NCC left records that emphasize their identities as part of that liberal, transnational body, and I replicate some of the archive's selection bias in my own work by accepting the NCC's collective identity as important and meaningful context for the centralized efforts of the Home movement. My work emphasizes the coordinators of a movement with national scope rather than focusing on local groups, though I sometimes get a view of those local groups and their projects through reports or summaries produced by national meetings. By illuminating the NCC's identity, role, and perspective, this study can provide structure for future studies of Protestant home and family movements, studies that might look more closely at local or denominational efforts. Future studies might well also examine the family reform efforts of Catholics, a topic I do not address. For all its emphasis on ecumenism, I find no trace of NCC efforts to work with Catholics. Home efforts within the Catholic communities in China thus remain under my radar and beyond the scope of this project.

The materials I study were produced in the Protestant publication boom in Shanghai from the second to fourth decades of the twentieth century. The National Christian Council produced some of its Home materials itself and had the rest published by the Christian Literature Society (CLS), a publishing house created in 1892 to help enlighten the Chinese about "the true nature of Christianity."[2] From its inception, the

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[2] *Report of the Christian Literature Society for China for the Period from 4th March, 1892, to 18th February, 1893, to Which is Appended Report of the Proceedings at the Annual Meeting held in the saloon*

NCC was closely affiliated with the prolific Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). These organizations, especially the YWCA, were highly attuned to and responsive to intellectual writings on family reform.[3] Both the YWCA and YMCA published frequently on such topics as the Confucian family, filial piety, women's liberation, marriage, and children, sometimes explicitly bringing Christian ideals or doctrines into their writings and sometimes not. The Shanghai Municipal Archive houses rich and plentiful materials on the NCC, YWCA, YMCA, and CLS, all of which were based in Shanghai.

The NCC's ties to the YMCA date back to its origins in the World Missionary Conference held at Edinburgh in 1910. At that conference, Cheng Jingyi (1881-1939), a young Chinese pastor from a London Missionary Society family, gave speeches calling for Chinese leadership of the church in China and decrying the divisiveness of Western denominationalism. Another important voice at that conference was John R. Mott (1865-1955) of the YMCA. Mott took a leading role in creating institutions to meet the needs expressed in Cheng's speeches. To that end, Mott pushed for the creation of a Continuation Committee to keep momentum after the conference. In 1913, he helped form a China-specific Continuation Committee, and in 1922, that committee gave birth in turn to the National Christian Council of China.[4] Ties to the leaders of the 1910

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of the Royal Hotel, Edinburgh, on 3rd March, 1893 (Glasgow: Aird & Coghill Printers, 1893?), 6. SMA, U131-0-69.

[3] The YWCA seems to have politicized earlier than the YMCA, which only broke its political neutrality in 1925. Shirley S. Garrett, *Social Reformers in Urban China: The Chinese Y.M.C.A., 1895-1926* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 176-8.

[4] Bays, *A New History*, 101-2.

ecumenical conference and to the International Missionary Council those leaders created were of lasting importance to the NCC's vision and leadership.

The NCC and the Continuation Committees preceding it were built around a set of principles closely related to Christian internationalism, a movement that sought to decouple Christianity from the nation in the 1920s and 1930s. Michael G. Thompson highlights two strands within Christian internationalism: "radical anti-imperialist internationalism of missionaries-turned socialists like Sherwood Eddy" and ecumenical internationalism. My study of the NCC shows it to have been closely linked to these currents of thought. But where Thompson focuses his study on the New York-based magazine *The World Tomorrow* and the international ecumenical conferences of the 1920s and 1930s, my study emphasizes the transnational religious community that developed in China.[5] I believe that the NCC helps fill in gaps in Thompson's picture by showing the type of cooperation and collaborative creation occurring on the ground in a non-American context.

Thompson's methodology has informed my own. Thompson seeks to reassess the work of theologian Reinhold Niebuhr by considering him in the context of the thinkers by whom he was surrounded on a daily or near-daily basis at *The World Tomorrow*, rather than as other scholars have done, by removing Niebuhr's work from its context and reading it alongside other important books. I have similarly tried to keep in mind the immediate community of the people whose writings I analyze in this dissertation, considering it likely that the people who worked face-to-face as peers in the committees

[5] Michael G. Thompson, *For God and Globe: Christian Internationalism in the United States between the Great War and the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), 1-14.

and offices of the NCC likely had a significant influence upon each other. Westerners in China and other missions had a great influence on movements like Christian internationalism and the American Protestant fundamentalist-modernist divide, and have merited study on that basis, but they themselves were influenced by their interactions and discussions with their non-Western colleagues in their host countries, where the metaphorical rubber hit the road. These non-Western colleagues often remain relatively faceless in historical accounts in contrast with their Western associates. My dissertation seeks to fill in the story of some of the important interactions in which Chinese and Western Christians collaborated and exchanged ideas, highlighting some Chinese individuals whose work seems to have been important in the formation of Christian family norms.

The question of ancestor worship was of central and transformative importance in Chinese Christianity. It was an issue on which different cultural and religious values were the source of conflicts sometimes viewed as a fundamental clash of cultures. By laying out the twentieth century debates on ancestor worship in the second and third chapters of this dissertation, I highlight the variety of views on this old problem, providing perspective on the rise of Christian liberalism and internationalism, and giving a detailed look at some developments in theological and ecclesiological belief that alarmed those of a fundamentalist bent. The writings of Chinese and Western writers that I examine here are *important* because they mattered in Christian internationalism, in Chinese transnationalism, and in the lives of individuals and families who were influenced by the Christianize the Home movement and associated literacy, hygiene, and child-rearing movements. These writings are *interesting* as the products and evidence of individual

creative minds ordering their beliefs and their imperatives within rich intellectual and religious milieus.

Historiographical Interventions

My focus on cultural synthesis helps us escape the pitfalls of old questions about the extent to which Christianity in China can be described as cultural imperialism. Recent works have moved away from this debate, with its emphasis on Western actors and agency, by emphasizing the indigenization of Christianity in China. Ryan Dunch and Eugenio Menegon each examine groups in which Christianity sank into local culture, developing strength and local characteristics as generations passed.[6] More recently a spate of new projects focus on Chinese Christians who created their own movements and congregations, like the Jesus Family[7], the True Jesus Church,[8] and the preacher Wang Mingdao.[9] Historian of Christianity Lian Xi wrote a book, *Redeemed by Fire: the Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China*, that postulates that these movements and others that were independent of mission influence were the source of Christianity's later strength in China. Lian describes them collectively as "popular Christianity:" Pentecostal,

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[6] Eugenio Menegon, *Ancestors, Virgins, and Friars: Christianity as a Local Religion in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center for the Harvard-Yenching Institute: Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2009); Ryan Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants and the Making of a Modern China, 1857-1927* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
[7] Tao Feiya, *Zhongguo de Jidujiao wutuobang: Yesu Jiating* [China's Christian utopia: the Jesus Family, 1921-1952] (Hong Kong: Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 2004).
[8] Melissa Inouye, "Miraculous Mundane: The True Jesus Church and Chinese Christianity in the Twentieth Century" (doctoral thesis, Harvard, 2011), Proquest (3446123).
[9] Amy O'Keefe, "Walking the Enlightened Path: Wang Mingdao's Road to Independent Christianity," in *1943: China at the Crossroads,* ed. Joseph W. Esherick and Matthew T. Combs (Ithaca, NY: East Asia Program, Cornell University, 2015), 365-90.

they were fueled by the "religious fervor and creativity of the masses that were excluded, for the most part, from the pursuits of the elite in Chinese society."[10]

Recent research, including Lian's, shows branches of Christianity without links to Western institutions, branches that achieved the old goal, articulated by nineteenth-century missionaries, of a church that was self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating.[11] This is important work. Works on indigenous Chinese Christian groups offer a rebuttal to the idea that Christianity is a foreign import, asserting the agency and creative force of the Chinese Christians who created them. They show that Christianity can be a Chinese phenomenon, sometimes criticizing Communist Party verdicts against Chinese Christians that at least ostensibly were based on the idea of their connections with Western imperialism.[12]

Histories of Christianity in China that emphasized cultural imperialism have helped highlight abuses exacted in the name of Christianity and, particularly in the Vietnam era, this literature appropriately contested assumptions of Western ideological superiority. Here I think of the volume edited by John K. Fairbank, *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*.[13] However, elements of the cultural imperialism perspective have led to problems in the historical literature on Christianity in China. Lian Xi's book on what he terms popular Christianity repeats Fairbank's assertion that the

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[10] Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2010), 12, 109.
[11] Peter Tze-Ming Ng, *Chinese Christianity: An Interplay Between Global and Local Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1.
[12] E.g. Wang Mingdao, *Wang Mingdao de zuihou zibai*, ed. Xing Fuzeng (Hong Kong: Jidao chubanshe, 2013).
[13] John King Fairbank, ed., *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974).

missionary enterprise had failed to convert the Chinese in the desired numbers, and gives significant credit for Christianity's growth since the mid-twentieth century to indigenous (non-mission-linked) groups.[14] As foreign missionaries were expelled from China in the Mao period, the incredible growth in Christianity since that period began is of course due to the efforts of Chinese Christians.[15] The framing of Lian's project, however, sets up Chinese mission-independent groups in contrast to the "alien faith" of mission groups.

The framing of Lian's work exaggerates the divide between Western-linked and indigenous churches in the Republican period. Wang Mingdao, for instance, refused formal affiliation with such liberal groups as the YMCA, but happily accepted invitations to preach at conservative denominational churches. A history that describes the dominant divide in Republican Protestantism as between indigenous Chinese churches and mission-linked churches runs the risk of failing to do justice to the significant links between many of them, and risks downplaying other divisions within Chinese Christianity.

Strictly distinguishing "Chinese" churches from mission-linked churches rhetorically erases the national and cultural identity of the Chinese Christians worshiping, working, and leading in mission organizations including the NCC, the Church of Christ in China, and any number of other churches with strong ties to Western missions and denominations. Theologian Chloë Starr, who analyzes Chinese Christian theology in its historical context, concisely sums up such problems in the literature. Starr recognizes that many church leaders even in "independent" Chinese churches had complex ties with Western organizations, including simply having been trained abroad or in mission

[14] Lian Xi, *Popular Christianity in Modern China,* 8.
[15] This point is also made in Peter Tze-Ming Ng, *Chinese Christianity,* 78-9.

churches. She calls the distinction between "mission" and "Chinese" church artificial because of these international ties. Starr's monograph, *Chinese Theology*, analyzes the writings of Chinese Christian leaders from a variety of churches. She finds that "all have dedicated their lives to the study of something both transcendent and localized."[16] I echo Starr regarding the distinction between mission and Chinese churches. I believe this distinction was drawn to highlight the agency of Chinese actors and oppose the argument that Christianity was a Western import, both of which are important tasks. But to define Chinese Christianity in a way that passes the label of "foreign" to all other Christian churches, however, runs the risk of ignoring such cooperative agency and creative formulation of Christian thought as is found in the Christianize the Home movement.

Some have criticized the NCC and other transnational organizations for not pushing for change fast enough. Lian describes the NCC as seeking to create indigenous Christianity in its own image and as "a naturalized Chinese Christianity with all the urbanity and cosmopolitanism of a mellow liberal Christianity unhurried by any eschatological exigencies."[17] This view of a complacent NCC that was insufficiently radical to attract at least certain demographics of followers is similar to Jun Xing's assessment of the YMCA; Jun Xing argues that the YMCA failed to capture the hearts and minds of China's youth because its Social Gospel ideology was too gradualist.[18]

While many students turned to Communism and many in the countryside to the more Pentecostal indigenous churches rather than to slower-acting mission-based Social

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[16] Chloë Starr, *Chinese Theology: Text and Context* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2016), 10.
[17] Lian Xi, *Popular Christianity in Modern China*, 61.
[18] Jun Xing, *Baptized in the Fire of Revolution: The American Social Gospel and the YMCA* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1996).

Gospel-oriented institutions, the assumption of direct competition between Social Gospel Christianity and either communism or Pentecostal indigenous Christian movements – and the assumption that this competition was the decisive factor in the decline of mission-linked Christianity in China – threatens to go too far in the direction of a "who lost China" approach, assuming that if Christians had just somehow handled things differently, communism would not have become the dominant political and ideological force that it did. A linked failure narrative is the "why the missionary endeavor failed" teleology, in which the fact that missionaries were expelled from China or that Chinese Christians seem responsible for Christianity's survival reflects poorly on the missionary movement rather than reflecting the political priorities of the new People's Republic of China.

Both these approaches present problems. I question the assumption that Christianity and Communism were truly opponents. It is a story that oversimplifies the interplay between ideologies in the Republican period and ignores the mixed responses to communism from Christians. I question this narrative largely because it is such a poor fit with the long process of accommodation that I see occurring in the NCC. This process may in fact have been, as Jun Xing argued, unsuccessful because of its gradualism. But we ignore the desire of a transnational community to make Christianity and communism compatible only in the service of an essentializing clash of civilizations model that is neither accurate nor useful. I follow Edward Said, who argues that "Rather than the manufactured clash of civilizations, we need to concentrate on the slow working together

of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together in far more interesting ways than any abridged or inauthentic mode of understanding can allow."[19]

I also question the assumption that missionary work failed in China, a framing that implies a static enterprise simply losing funding and other support. My research shows at least one outlet of missionary energy that did not decline, but rather effected a prolonged transformation. The idea that missionary work in China ultimately failed is widespread in the historical literature. Daniel Bays describes the golden age of missionary work (1902-1927) in contrast with the 1930s, emphasizing a decrease in funding for missionaries due both to the Great Depression and to increasing doubts about the validity of the missionary enterprise.[20] Lian Xi's first book, *The Conversion of Missionaries,* describes and explains this disenchantment, telling the stories of missionaries who experienced a "conversion" through their extended engagement with Chinese culture and religion. Many shifted to a more syncretistic approach to religion, feeling that Western Christian triumphalist assumptions of superiority were shutting Christianity off from the inspiration and strength available in Chinese culture and religion.[21] The second and third chapters of this dissertation address some of the intellectual and theological discussions that evidenced and caused such shifts in thinking. I point out in chapter three that it was not only Western missionaries who resisted incorporating Chinese practices into their worship; many Chinese Christians shared their

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[19] Edward Said, "Preface to the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition," *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), xxix.
[20] Bays, *New History*, chapter 5.
[21] Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907-1932* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 120-23.

hesitation, and some also became more open to synthesis over the course of debates. But I believe that most of those who went through these conversions continued to consider themselves Christian, and merely viewed their God-given calls to serve as having shifted toward new and better goals. Similarly, some mission-linked organizations changed and adjusted as new structures and new aims seemed more in keeping with their new ideals of racial and cultural equality and respect. Chapter one of this dissertation shows the evolution of the NCC in response to Chinese anti-imperialist nationalism and suggests that decisions made by Chinese and Western leaders within the cooperative space of the NCC led them to develop ideals of Christian internationalism.

While there were some missionaries who learned about and desired religious synthesis with Buddhism,[22] most of the Chinese and Western discussions about religious accommodations I address here were far friendlier to Confucianism. Some held Confucianism in high regard, claiming that the deficiencies in it were cultural accruals from Buddhism, Daoism, and folk religion.[23] My fourth chapter discusses proposals for combining Confucian and Christian practices made throughout the first decades of the twentieth century. This chapter thus resonates with scholarship on "Confucian Christianity" in earlier periods.[24] Like Eugenio Menegon and Peter Tze-Ming Ng, my study considers the combination of global forces with lived Chinese culture.[25] However,

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[22] Notto R. Thelle, "Changed by the East: Notes on Missionary Communication and Transformation." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 30 no. 3 (July, 2006), 115-18, 120-121; see also Lian Xi, *Conversion of Missionaries*, 183-7.
[23] This attitude was fairly classist; it echoed longstanding elite Confucian literati attitudes toward popular religion. Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants,* 6.
[24] Menegon, *Ancestors, Virgins, and Friars*, 6.
[25] Peter Tze-Ming Ng, *Chinese Christianity.*

as a study of a self-consciously transnational community, my work has a different focus than research that sees Chinese agency primarily in groups whose indigenization occurred in tension with Western leadership. My study highlights an instance in which Chinese leaders helped shape a council in which they were intended to be on equal footing with their Western counterparts.

Though little historical scholarship exists on the NCC, the organization often comes up incidentally in historical analyses of other groups. Jane Hunter's analysis of the lives and work of American female missionaries in China includes references to some missionaries who were involved in the NCC.[26] Others consider the NCC in discussions of the broader community of missionaries and educated Chinese Christian leaders. Bays invented the term "Sino-Foreign Protestant Establishment" to describe the informal group of influential leaders who held power as a Christian elite. He points out that this transnational community did not begin by sitting down together as equals; it attained its transnational character on the choice of missionaries who then allowed the incorporation of Chinese leaders into their "establishment."[27] The NCC, created in 1922, seems to have built upon these foundations and gone a step beyond by engaging Chinese leadership and Western leadership on at least ostensibly equal bases from its formative meeting.

One of this dissertation's contributions to the field of Chinese Christian studies is made by highlighting the nature of female leadership in the NCC's Christianize the Home

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[26] I noted the name of Luella Miner. Jane Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility: American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1984); *Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui di'er jie nianhui baogao* [Second Annual Report of the National Christian Council of China] (Shanghai: NCC, 1924), 148. SMA U123-0-14-89.
[27] Bays, *New History*, 99-100.

Committee. Some mission boards did not even allow women to speak in their meetings;[28] in the NCC female leadership was welcomed, albeit at a lower rate than male leadership and predominantly in arenas gendered female, like the Home Committee. Studies have been made of Christian education for girls and women, of Chinese Christian female doctors, and of less-educated Bible Women.[29] By examining the Christianize the Home movement, I bring to light a large cohort of female leaders of the type mentioned in Helen Schneider's work on home economics education – highly educated in matters related to women's spheres, but qualified and employed to serve outside their own domiciles.[30]

As Schneider shows, female influence beyond the home was growing in many professions and social work organizations in the early twentieth century. Ryan Dunch has given a brief introduction to Christian women's leadership in conferences of their own creation in China. He describes women's leadership in creating and administering spheres that paralleled those typically run by men, through forming women's institutions like hospitals and schools.[31] But in the NCC's Home Committee, I find an arena of women's leadership that is not so segregated from men and that does not parallel existing male-dominated structures. The Christianize the Home Committee was a place where women

[28] Hunter, *Gospel of Gentility*, 102.
[29] All of these topics are addressed in Jessie G. Lutz, ed., *Pioneer Chinese Christian Women: Gender, Christianity, and Social Mobility* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2010).
[30] Helen Schneider, *Keeping the Nation's House: Domestic Management and the Making of Modern China* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011).
[31] Ryan Dunch, "'Mothers to Our Country': Conversion, Education, and Ideology Among Chinese Protestant Women, 1870-1930," in Lutz, ed. *Pioneer Chinese Christian Women: Gender, Christianity, and Social Mobility* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2010), 336.

led and men also participated, a group that aimed at instructing and training fathers as well as mothers.

Women obtained leadership over men through a combination of factors. On the one hand, gender roles (both Chinese and Western) privileged women as leaders in home and domestic matters. On the other hand, iconoclastic intellectuals' attacks on the Confucian patriarchal family system rendered family a topic with relevance for all Christian leaders to understand. So the Home Committee, led by women and always having a female majority, was made a permanent standing committee of the NCC. As described in chapter one, the Committee's broad definition of its work legitimized its members' involvement and education in matters as diverse as medicine, psychology, nutrition, and education, in addition to topics like cleanliness and home décor. This breadth paralleled that of the home economics movement, but included women's spiritual leadership as well. In addition to promoting an important role for women in their own families' spirituality, the Home Committee at times exerted authority over ordained clergy, promoting their own agendas for their annual Home Week programs, including sermon topics. Ordination was reserved for men, but the Home Committee created opportunities for women to exert spiritual and ecclesiastical leadership.

The Home Committee created a sphere for women's leadership and a need for publications by and for women. The leaders of the Home Committee were also responsible for helping to create published literature for the training of local home leaders as well as for ordinary women. In chapter five, I showcase a play written by Li Guanfang, a prolific writer and leader in the Home Committee, and a set of novels written by a Canadian missionary named Margaret H. Brown. To my knowledge, neither of these

sources has been studied before. Analyzing Li's and Brown's work and highlighting the leadership of many capable women on a standing committee of the NCC gets us away from the male-centric topics and organizations that often dominate historical narratives. Writers producing literature to be used in Christianize the Home Weeks were helping to set the tone of conversations. With motherhood at the center but fatherhood also a topic of instruction, these Home Committee publications emphasized women's importance to ecclesiastical leaders as well as their parishioners. Li, Brown, and other producers of Home Committee materials provided literary models for Christian women in the characters they wrote about. Through their authorship, they also offered themselves as models of Christian womanhood with power in the church and influence in society.

The National Christian Council of China was not the only organization that had a Christianize the Home Movement. The Protestant Church of Christ in China (CCC) had one, closely linked with the NCC's, but I did not find significant publications related to it. I do find enough overlap between its personnel (and CCC personnel more generally) and the NCC's Home Committee to assume a close relationship.[32] A bit farther afield, an independent preacher named Chen Chonggui (Marcus Ch'eng), who was only minimally involved with the NCC's movement, ran a column with frequent "Christianize the Home" messages in his magazine between 1931 and 1948. Chen also published a book in 1936 on the topic which included essays from prominent Chinese members of the Christian

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[32] Merwin, *Adventure in Unity,* 119. The 1939 secretary of the Church of Christ in China's Christianizing the Home program was the author of some of the NCC's 1937 Home Week materials. *Appendix to the Report of the Home Committee, The Eleventh (Biennial) Meeting of the National Christian Council of China, Shanghai, May 5-11, 1937,* 8. SMA.

establishment.[33] Prolific fundamentalist preacher Wang Mingdao, still farther removed from the liberal Christian community, also wrote quite a bit about family relationships, particularly during the Anti-Japanese War. Because this study is focused on cultural exchange, I use writings published from within the NCC and its immediate transnational community, leaving aside analysis of Chen's and Wang's family writings for now.

Women missionaries have a long history of focusing their work on women and domestic subjects, a history that extends far earlier than this dissertation's twentieth-century focus. Dana Robert argues that this focus on the Christian Home started in the eighteenth century industrialization process, and that a focus on homes as "object lessons" was part of Protestant missionary work from its beginnings. Evangelicalism taught that day-to-day morality was more important than doctrine, so a well-ordered home was very important, as was the person of the mother in it, "modest, educated, virtuous."[34] A similar connection between home, virtue, and a woman's person is discussed in Hunter's book, *The Gospel of Gentility*; "women who preserved their homes to inspire elevated sentiments could not ignore the responsibility of insuring that their own person would make the correct improving impression on family and visitors."[35] The Christian quality of "improvement" is one I discuss in light of literary model homes in chapter five.

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[33] Chen Chonggui (Marcus Ch'eng), ed., *Jiduhua jiating* (The Christian Home: A Symposium) (Hankou: Zhongguo Jidu shengjiao shuhui, 1936).

[34] Dana Robert, "The 'Christian Home' as a Cornerstone of Anglo-American Missionary Thought and Practice," in Dana L. Robert, ed., *Converting Colonialism: Visions and Realities in Mission History, 1706-1914* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 136-7, 143.

[35] Hunter, *Gospel of Gentility*, 136.

In different parts of the world, work to promote Christian home values had different qualities and meaning, and mission work for homes, according to Robert, played an important role in shaping Victorian morality.[36] In Indian missions, native homes were sometimes seen as bad influences, from which Christian girls' schools offered an escape. In the American south, domestic education was seen as a tool for racial uplift, as elsewhere it was a matter of class uplift. Robert recognizes the complexities in this multi-faceted movement, employing language reminiscent of the cultural imperialism debate: "Depending on the context," she writes, "the Christian home can be seen in retrospect as either a 'colonisation of consciousness' or a source of dignity and even social change for women in a changing world."[37]

Robert's is a landmark work on Christian domesticity. The ways that the complexities she describes played out in various Asian and Pacific missionary sites is the focus of an recent edited volume entitled *Divine Domesticities*. Discussions of Asia in that book are somewhat scattered, varying between biographical and institutional accounts.[38] Monograph studies that come closest to dealing with this topic include Hyaeweol Choi's book about Christian education for women in Korea, and Helen Schneider's book on the home economics movement in China.[39] A single Chinese-

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[36] Robert, "The 'Christian Home,'" 136; Victorian norms and expectations for woman hood are discussed in Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18.2, Part 1 (Summer, 1966), 151-74.
[37] Robert, "The 'Christian Home,'" 155-58.
[38] Hyaeweol Choi and Margaret Jolly, eds., *Divine Domesticities: Paradoxes in Asia and the Pacific* (Canberra, Australia: ANU Press, 2014).
[39] Hyaeweol Choi, *Gender and Mission Encounters in Korea: New Women, Old Ways* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2009); Helen Schneider, *Keeping the Nation's House.*

language master's thesis describes the Chinese Christianize the Home movement, claiming that secularization was the major reason for its downfall.[40]

Christianity's relationship with scientific modernity is central to my study. By the twentieth century, domestic space and tasks had begun to be scientized, as Schneider discusses; now, such varied topics as home economics, disease prevention, infant care, and child psychology came together. In this light the work of Margaret Mih Tillman on childhood in Republican China is very relevant.[41] The context of the New Culture Movement's embracing of science and democracy is important to the trends in liberal Christians thought. My study of ancestor worship debates reveals a set of ideological tensions in which Christianity championed rationalism in opposition to superstition, but simultaneously sought common ground with Chinese religions in the hope of keeping spirituality alive in a modernizing, secularizing society. In my work I seek to respect the combination of scientific home management and spiritual factors that contributed to the ideal of the Christian home. While I do not focus on topics like hygiene or infant care in my own study, I do consider how the presentation of such topics was part of visions of a spiritual and rational ideal home.

Many intellectual Chinese women were engaged in social work for women in the early twentieth-century. They and male intellectuals published voluminous writings on

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[40] Wang Jie's useful work pointed me to the *Jiayuan* magazine I discuss in my Conclusion. Wang Jie, "Minguo shiqi de Jiduhua jiating yundong yanjiu" (Study on the Christianizing the Home Movement in the Republic of China Era), (Master's Thesis, Shandong University, 2010), CAJ.
[41] Robert, "The 'Christian Home,'" 159; Margaret Mih Tillman, "Precocious Politics: Preschool Education and Child Protection in China, 1903-1953" (doctoral thesis, UC Berkeley, 2013), eScholarship (http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0mv5n5kj); On hygiene and its meanings in the twentieth century, see Ruth Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity: Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

women's roles and family in YMCA and YWCA publications, among others. Educated youth of various religious backgrounds were hyper-focused on family issues in the second and third decades of the twentieth century, as concern about the competitive strength of the Chinese nation led them to seek the source of their culture's perceived undoing. They found a scapegoat in Confucian patriarchy and the principle of filial piety.[42] The New Culture and May Fourth movements in which the work of iconoclastic intellectuals held so much sway is an important story. It is one told by Chow Tse-tsung, reexamined by Vera Schwarcz, and connected to the growth of state-centric nationalism by Susan Glosser.[43] But it is not the only story of intellectual change in the 1920s and 1930s, nor of family reform. The story of the New Culture and May Fourth movements is important context for the Christianize the Home movement, but it was not an overpowering wave against which tradition would surely crumble. While recognizing ways that the Christianize the Home movement responded to New Culture critiques, I highlight the fact that this movement was transformatively conservative. It embraced aspects of Confucian tradition, rather than rejecting it all, and it sought ways that Christian teachings and efforts could heal the ills of society that so concerned the New Culture intellectuals.

This dissertation does not tell the story of how China "modernized," attempted to do so, or failed to do so. I trace the way that a complicated and diverse community, which

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[42] Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement: Intellectual Revolution in Modern China* (Taipei: Rainbow Bridge Book Co., 1976. Originally published by Harvard University Press, 1960).
[43] Vera Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Susan Glosser, *Chinese Visions of Family and State, 1915-1953* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

claimed and sought unity under shared religious beliefs, found and created meaning as they established new religious traditions that suited their cultural contexts. To the extent that there are two sides to this story, Western and Chinese, I want to address them both, but I also want to blur those lines and address the paradoxes that arise when a Chinese person receives a Western-style education or when a Western missionary falls in love with Buddhist or Confucian teachings, when people change because they listen to their colleagues and find that they can, after all, understand anothe perspective.

Structure of the Dissertation

My first chapter discusses the formation of the Home Committee, which existed as a standing committee of the NCC from 1924 to 1951. I trace its historical context until 1938, showing the NCC as a transnational community built on an ideal of cooperation and interchange. The NCC's responsiveness to both Chinese concerns and western gender norms afforded an opportunity for women's leadership, and the women who led the Home Committee maximized upon that opportunity, establishing their movement in a way that affirmed women's leadership in ecclesiastical and social service, as well as in publishing. The second chapter addresses a broader community's writings on a narrower topic; looking at publications from missionary publications and the YWCA and YMCA in addition to the NCC, I analyze debates about ancestor worship. Attitudes toward the ancestral rites and the principle of filial piety changed as Christians rejected evolutionary hierarchies of civilizations and instead started to parse the good from the bad in Chinese and Western cultures. This parsing task was done in an attitude I call benevolent

essentialism, an act of seeking to embrace the praiseworthy parts of Chinese culture and Christianity so as to save both.

In the third chapter, I continue my analysis of the ancestor worship debates, showing how the idea of fulfillment theory became widespread in the early twentieth-century church. This idea that divine inspiration had shaped non-Christian religions, and that Christianity could find those inspired bits and fulfil their potential, was closely tied to the benevolent essentialism I noted in chapter two. Some Christians used fulfilment theory to rethink Christianity, highlighting the unique strengths that Chinese Christianity could contribute to world Christianity.

In chapter four, I look at two different approaches to Christian family. First, I examine the practical approaches that different leaders suggested to meld ancestor worship or filial piety with Christian beliefs. A competing vision of family spirituality came from American Sunday School and family altar publications, and this chapter examines those ideals and the way they were adapted for use in China. In the fifth chapter, we see two model Christian families in two sets of fictional literature, one written by a Chinese Home Committee leader, and one by a Canadian missionary. These two model families show different ideals for family spirituality and women's roles in it. In both, the spiritual power of the home is the creation of women's education and their service within and outside of the home. Both emphasize the agency of children, and both show a partially extended family in which filial piety is reflected. The Home Committee's transformative conservatism leaves the Christian home, and especially the wife and mother within it, in a complicated relationship with patriarchy. The Christian

home was a moving target, but it entailed dedication to improvement, building of character, and shared worship experiences.

The fact that the Christian home still was a moving target in the 1930s when the Anti-Japanese War began may have been a source of its lasting strength. The Christianize the Home Committee had always combined ideals from Western education with Chinese family culture. As the work of the Committee expanded to consider the needs of families in rural areas as well as the countryside, its work took on new shape, continuing its pattern of adaptation. That the Home Committee's visions of the Christianized home included conservative elements like respect for the family structure, affirmation of filial piety, and a tempered patriarchy helped it to be accessible and to resonate with treasured Chinese family values. The expansive and flexible ideal of the Christian home made it a place of creative spiritual power where character is formed and where women lead, a place characterized by improvement in which women's literacy and education plays an essential part. This progressive religious institution was suited to weather the storms of the twentieth century and contribute to Christianity's great success in China.

Chapter One – The Christianize the Home Committee

The Christianize the Home movement coalesced and found its institutional home in the NCC in the 1920s and established a regular pattern of work that reached cities across China by 1930. The creation of the NCC, a progressive, cooperative body, was an opening for a new institutional leadership for women. In this chapter, I place the home movement in its institutional context, describing the Christianize Home Committee's rise and its work within the NCC. I address the NCC's responses to the rise of anti-imperial nationalism and the anti-Christian movements, and its ties to the International Missionary Council (IMC) in order to establish the progressive transnational milieu in which the Home Committee worked. This chapter will show how, within that milieu, the Home Committee women reached for increased influence and authority through their expansive work.

The NCC's formation in 1922 sought to rectify both of the concerns that Cheng Jingyi vocalized at the Edinburgh mission conference of 1910: the need for Chinese leadership over the church, and the need to overcome the distasteful denominationalism that was so divisive among missionaries and their churches. The NCC sought to "create an atmosphere of respect and confidence and make co-operative work of all kinds, and union, where possible, seem natural, feasible and desirable." It self-styled as a clearing house for research and resources that could help all Protestant churches, and aimed to use "both a national and an international viewpoint" to address China's problems.[1]

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[1] "Resolution Constituting a National Christian Council," in*National Christian Council of China Annual Report 1922-3,* 2. MRL 6: National Christian Council of China Records, series 1, box 1, folder 1, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York. On the NCC

The China Continuation Committee, the body that had worked to fulfill the mandates of Edinburgh between 1913 and 1922, set a rule of parity between Chinese and Western participants, and at the 1922 meeting at which the China Continuation Committee ended and the NCC began, the parity rule was codified and achieved. Thus as far as personnel were concerned, the NCC was transnational from the start.[2] Its composition prefigured the principles of equality and promotion of Chinese leadership. This does not mean that the NCC perfectly succeeded in practicing equality, nor that it finalized a complete transfer of Christian leadership out of Western hands. Still, the stated goals of the group, and the embodiment of those goals in its composition, marked the NCC as a transnational organization and created space for cooperative construction.

At the 1922 conference, some took advantage of the spirit of change to push for more women's leadership in the Chinese church. A few of the far outnumbered women at the conference made their voices heard to this end, including Ms. Fan Yurong of the YWCA. Fan made a speech asking that women be afforded equal opportunities to serve

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as a clearinghouse, see *NCC NHBG 1924*, 147. The survey published in 1922 by the China Continuation Committee included some calls for clearing houses. Milton T. Stauffer, ed. *The Christian Occupation of China: A General Survey of the Numerical Strength and Geographical Distribution of the Christian Forces in China Made by The Special Committee on Survey and Occupation, China Continuation Committee, 1918-1921.* Shanghai: China Continuation Committee, 1922, 380, 422. The Constitution of the NCC included as one of thirteen functions for the council, "To provide a bureau of information and to conduct and publish the results of surveys for the guidance of churches, missions and mission boards." Other functions listed include coordinating between different bodies and organizations. F. Rawlinson, Helen Thoburn, and D. MacGillivray, eds., *The Chinese Church as Revealed in The National Christian Conference Held in Shanghai, Tuesday, May 2, to Thursday, May 11, 1922.* Shanghai: The Oriental Press, 1922?, 695.

[2] Daniel Bays, *New History,* 102. There were quotas for number of Chinese representatives (as opposed to missionaries), carefully outlined in the Annual Report. A minimum of 3,000 communicants was required for a church to be represented on the NCC. Above 5,000, the number of representatives increased by one for every additional 5,000 communicants. Number of missionaries and number of Chinese representatives was spelled out specifically for each group, so that in most cases the number of Chinese would slightly exceed number of Western missionaries ("Resolution Constituting a National Christian Council," 3).

within the church. Anticipating the argument that there were few women qualified to lead, Fan argued that women should be given the opportunities to serve and to be educated that would shape them into capable leaders.[3]

Another speaker, Cheng Guanyi, used this unique moment of change and atmosphere of transnationalism to argue on behalf of women. Cheng, who was probably the sister of Cheng Jingyi, showed her awareness of political and intellectual currents when she claimed that the reason Chinese society was listless and depressed was because one half of it was incomplete, inaccessible, shut away – and insufficiently angry about it.[4] She described the church itself as suffering from hemiplegia, paralysis of one side of the body. Cheng challenged listeners to carefully question whether Western traditions of female exclusion from ordination ought to be imported into China, or whether the Chinese situation might sustain more female involvement. She urged church leaders not to shut women away in auxiliary or affiliated organizations.[5] Cheng addressed the idea that culture could be separated from religious beliefs and invited a reevaluation of Western traditions in an effort to consciously and conscientiously pick and choose which cultural legacies from the Western churches to embrace and which to reject.

The NCC constitution provided only a moderate response to the requests of Fan and Cheng. It stipulated that at least one of four representatives to the NCC from any

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[3] Fan Yurong, "Nuzi lingxiu wenti" [The problem of female leadership], *Jidujiao quanguo dahui baogaoshu: Zhonghua minguo shiyi nian wu yue er zhi shiyi ri* [Report of the National Christian Conference: May 2 to 11, 1922] (Shanghai?, 1922?), 191. SLDD.
[4] The surname Cheng is unusual, and Cheng Guanyi shares the last character of her given name with Cheng Jingyi, a fact which indicates it may have been a generation name, shared by siblings and possibly cousins.
[5] Cheng Guanyi, "Funu yu jiaohui" [Women and church], *Jidujiao quanguo dahui baogaoshu: Zhonghua minguo shiyi nian wu yue er zhi shiyi ri* [Report of the National Christian Conference: May 2 to 11, 1922 [Report of the National Christian Conference] (Shanghai?, 1922?), 311-12. SLDD.

church, mission group, or other organization, must be female, but it did not achieve that goal.[6] In the end, church-nominated representatives to the Council were nearly twenty-one percent female. Women held fewer than fifteen percent of Standing Committee and Special Committee positions, as reported at the first Annual Meeting of the NCC. Representation of women was fairly even across those committees.[7]

Two years later, though, the Christianize the Home Committee was made a standing committee of the NCC. This new standing committee was seventy-seven percent female. In the years that followed, the Christianize the Home Committee continued to stand out for its female leadership.[8] This may have been a sad fulfillment of Cheng Guanyi's fears that women would be shut away in auxiliary organizations. But though the committee represented the majority of female involvement in the NCC, the Home Committee secretary presided over male committee members, and sat in council with the male members of the NCC's Executive Committee. Furthermore, as this chapter will show, the women of the Home Committee capitalized on their opportunity for leadership by making the topical reach of "home work" broad and inclusive, and by establishing ambitious publishing goals that increased their influence.

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[6] Two of every nine representatives from the types of groups listed was supposed to be female. *National Christian Council of China Annual Report 1922-3,* 3-4. MRL 6: National Christian Council of China Records, series 1, box 1, folder 1, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

[7] Ibid., 2-4. Of the women listed on committees, there is exact parity of Chinese and Western women. In terms overall nominated female membership, there were two more Westerners than Chinese – fourteen versus twelve. Ibid., 36-9.

[8] Ibid., 2; *ZQJX di'er jie nianhui baogao,* 68; *National Christian Council Annual Report 1923-24*, 172. MRL 6: National Christian Council of China Records, series 1, box 1, folder 1, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York; *Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui disan jie nianhui baogao* [Third Annual Report of the National Christian Council of China]. Shanghai: NCC, 1925, 158. SMA, U123-0-14-277; *National Christian Council Annual Report 1926-27*, 143. SMA, U123-0-17; *Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui diliu jie nianhui baogao* [Sixth Annual Report of the National Christian Council of China]. Shanghai: NCC, 1928, 87. SMA, U123-0-18-106.

The Development of the Christianize the Home Committee

The Christian home was a high-priority issue in the early projects of the new NCC, but the first few years were a time of institutional settling in which the Home Committee changed names and institutional status more than once. At its first annual meeting in 1923, the NCC selected the Christian home as one of four special subjects to be studied in the year to come. A committee was appointed to research the home, with the goal of gathering viewpoints from a broad range of people. The selection of these four topics, which also included "our approach to the industrialization of China," "our international expression," and "education in relation to the whole Christian programme," shows that the NCC was conscious of its historical moment in a post-WWI global situation when imperialism and Western expansion were under fire.[9] It was consciously reevaluating the church's "international expression," a phrase that brings to mind Cheng Guanyi's question about whether Western Protestantism's restriction on female ordination ought to be imported to China.

Work seeking to improve homes and families had been a mainstay of women's missionary efforts in China for years, as I will discuss in chapter four of this dissertation. By establishing a committee to address home and family in its male-dominated council, the NCC showed a willingness for greater cooperation on aspects of missionary work previously divided by gender, creating a permanent place for women in the central council of the NCC. As chapters two and three of this dissertation will show, the family

[9] *National Christian Council Annual Report 1922-3*, 72-3. SMA, U123-0-13.

was a topic of great importance to men in China – and it may be this fact that prompted the NCC's attention and created a space for expanded female leadership.

By taking up family questions the NCC signaled its sensitivity to the high tide of family reform debates rolling through the ranks of educated youth in the May Fourth era. The YMCA and YWCA, which were closely related to the NCC through shared leadership within China and in international bodies, were also aware of and highly concerned with the problems with which young intellectuals in China were wrestling. The YMCA announced a commitment to more student work in 1923; the NCC's 1923 selection of the home as a subject of special research likewise showed its members' willingness to make intellectuals' questions their questions.[10] By listing topics to look into and seeking a broad range of opinions, the NCC sought to fill its clearing-house role, but also to approach questions of conscience and doctrine cautiously, moving slowly and refraining from creedal declarations.

The Standing Committee on Social and Industrial Problems gave the "Commission on the Church and the Home" its mandate in the autumn of 1923: its duty was "To study problems connected with the Home and develop constructive plans for its betterment." The Commission reported the following year: "The aim of our work is stated to be 'The Establishment of Christian Homes.' …We assert that 'all family relationships' should be made Christian both as to inward spirit and outward form,' and that the principle underlying all such home life must be 'The love which is described in 1 Cor. 13:4 to 7; that is, love and reverence for the personality of others, expressing itself in

[10] Garret, *The Chinese Y.M.C.A.,*166.

courtesy and service.' Such an aim forbade our initiating merely spectacular and surface reform."[11] This Commission was taking its topic seriously.

The Commission on the Church and the Home intended to coordinate the work of existing groups with similar goals.[12] Like the NCC itself, the Commission on the Church and the Home wanted to fill the role of a clearing house for resources and research that could be a strength to Christian home work around China. Its initial efforts at correspondence were modest; in the four months between its formation and the submission of its report, the Commission contacted fifteen people in thirteen locales. It requested that these gather people into local "Committees on the Church and the Home," to study topics pertaining to family problems. The Commission made initial contact with magazines about relevant topics, in the hopes of being allowed to reprint particularly relevant articles, and approached experts on home and family to request literature that could be shared with local committees. Among these experts was Ava Milam, promoter of the Home Economics movement at Yenching University.

The topics on which the Commission sought cooperative research included broad questions into the functions and history of the family, questions which clearly reflect the concerns of New Culture thinkers. Prime among these concerns was the idea, expressed in Chen Duxiu's 1917 opening article in *New Youth*, that the Confucian patriarchal family system sucked the life and potential from its young people, stifling and limiting the

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[11] *NCC Annual Report 1923-24,* 66. The Chinese version of this report uses the term "Jidujiaohua jiating," or "Christianizing Families/Homes," where the English is rendered "The Establishment of Christian Homes." Later the "jiao" would be dropped, and the term "Jidhua jiating" would become "Christianize the Home." *ZQJX di'er jie nianhui baogao,* 68.

[12] *NCC Annual Report 1923-4*, 66.

potential of the nation.[13] Clearly in response to these concerns, the Commission issued a call to study the merits of the multi-generational patriarchal system versus the nuclear family system. It also sought research into customs surrounding betrothal, marriage, and inheritance. Signaling awareness of old, deeply-rooted problems in Chinese families, the committee sought research into the perennially fraught relationship between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. It asked questions about concubinage, including its origins and its effects on home and society, whether it was an economic matter, how to respond to it, finally, how the Christian church should respond to it.[14]

In asking these questions and requesting the assembly of local committees, the Commission was clearly recruiting people already involved in family reform or Christianizing efforts. A group of at least ten people attended the Home Committee discussion at the NCC annual meeting in 1924, including representatives from Hangzhou, Wenzhou, and Xiamen. Fan Yurong, the YWCA leader who had called for greater female leadership at the 1922 conference, and who took a leadership role in this meeting, reported that local Home Committees had been formed in the northern China, in Fengtian, Jilin, Jin county, Tianjin, and Jinan. While hardly constituting a flood, these local committees were a foundation upon which future work could build. A Committee report called these groups a "reason for optimism" and a sign of the committee's burden of responsibility to move the work ahead.[15]

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[13] Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement*, 46-7, 185.
[14] *NCC Annual Report 1923-4,* 66-9. In keeping with ecumenical principles, the term "Christian church" was used to describe all Protestant mission and church organizations.
[15] *ZQJX di'er jie nianhui baogao*, 147.

Given how extensive in scope the commission's 1924 research proposals were and how obviously preliminary its efforts to fulfill them had been to that point, it is little wonder that the Christian Home made it onto the NCC's short list of topics for special study again the next year, but gender likely also played a role. Citing research conducted in Beijing, the committee stated categorically that "our appeal should be to men quite as much as to women."[16] It seems that the fervor over family-related questions among China's young intellectuals made the topic unmistakably of general, not just feminine, interest.

In May of 1924, the Commission on the Church and the Home became a permanent Standing Committee of the NCC and was renamed the Committee on Church and Home. To support its work, it requested two Home secretaries to serve on the NCC, and called a committee of seven people to discuss finding them.[17] From this point on, the committee always had a female majority. Though I have found no documents detailing the committee selection process, I hypothesize that while Chinese male interest in the family justified prolonged attention from the NCC, strong Victorian ideas of women as the moral guardians of the home made this committee feel a natural place for female leadership. In addition, NCC leaders knew that existing Christian work in Chinese homes was of necessity carried on by women; it was the traditional separation of the world into inner and outer spheres, with women operating in the inner, that had necessitated the push

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[16] *NCC Annual Report 1923-4,* 37.
[17] *ZQJX di'er jie nianhui baogao*, 31; *NCC AR 1923-4*, 69, 172.

for female missionaries in the late nineteenth century. Only women could really go into Chinese homes.[18]

Though the Committee on the Church and the Home quickly formed links with individuals and groups around the country, the organization took several years to establish a pattern of regular function and production. In its early years, the Committee was plagued with leadership problems. In 1924, the NCC ratified the Home Committee's request for a professional Home Secretary, and it was filled by Fan Yurong.[19] Fan served only briefly, however, resigning in January of 1925 because of health problems. Though she kept working for some time after her resignation while the NCC sought a replacement, she shortly thereafter went back to school. The Home Committee's 1925 report to the NCC complained that they had never even been able to announce a general secretary to the public.[20] A Mr. Zhang Qinshi had been invited to share duties with Fan as joint secretary, but he had declined, so from 1924 to 1925 the Committee had no full-time secretary.[21]

In addition to this leadership problem at the top, the Committee was hobbled by the schedules of its membership. Between the annual meetings in 1924 and 1925, they were only rarely able to get a quorum to attend their committee meetings, and so were never able to pass legal motions.[22] Though the committee stabilized and came into its own by 1930, leadership transitions arose again later as the women in charge alternately

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[18] Hunter, *Gospel of Gentility*, 11.
[19] *ZQJX di'er jie nianhui baogao,* 147-8.
[20] *ZQJX disan jie nianhui baogao,* 100. On the reason for Fan's retirement, see *The National Christian Council: A Five Years' Review, 1922-1927* (Shanghai: NCC, n.d.), 7. SMA, U123-0-6-59.
[21] "Zhixing weiyuanhui baogao: tijiao yi jiu er wu nian disan jie nianhui" [Executive committee report: submitted in 1925 at the third annual conference], 2, 4. SMA, U123-0-15.
[22] *ZQJX disan jie nianhui baogao,* 100.

took maternity leave and left to pursue higher education opportunities. Fan Yurong's 1922 call to educate women so they could qualify for leadership ironically clashed with gendered calls to reproductive labor, resulting in instability for this female-led committee.[23]

Leadership problems notwithstanding, the committee desired access to up-to-date secular education pertaining to home and family life to use and to share. To that end, the Home Committee called on students living abroad to study the home and return to China armed with both "knowledge and experience,"[24] likely a reference to the new field of home economics. The Home Committee seems in line with an educational trend occurring at just that time: Chinese educators and reformers seeking the best ways to address female education and prepare women to help build the nation turned to Western nations, Japan, and the Philippines to find models of home economics programs.[25]

The term *jiating* can be translated as "home" or as "family," so there was considerable breadth to the range of issues the Home Committee could address. Though home economics was clearly closely related to the Home Committee's work, it was not all that they felt called to consider and do, and this created a struggle. This young committee had difficulty defining its work in a manageable way. The long list of home and family problems awaiting research was too unwieldy for the group; the Committee's discussion at the 1924 NCC conference indicates that the group had more questions than

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[23] The tug between religious service and expected domestic service experienced by female missionaries, especially after giving birth, is examined by Jane Hunter. Similar pressures surely applied to Chinese Christian women. Hunter, *Gospel of Gentility*.
[24] *NCC Annual Report 1923-24*, 69.
[25] Schneider, *Keeping the Nation's House*, 85-7.

answers. The conversation tugged the group in different direction, as it ran through questions like what publications were needed (a calendar would act as a morning and evening bell, offering constant calls to virtue in every home), to what topics ought to be the Committee's central concern (family worship), to what institutional routes the committee should take in promoting home work (schools – there, women would be trained up who would then marry important and ambitious men).

In addition to seeking greater access to scientific study and best practices for the home, some suggested other structures to help improve the home as a spiritual center. At the 1924 Conference, Pastor You Shuxun gave a speech about family problems and suggested that family religious educators establish family religious education societies. The following year, this idea was listed as one of the two top priorities in Home work.[26]

Another method for popular education that the 1924 report referenced was a "Better Homes Week" that had been run by a lady missionary in Beijing. Later, the Home Committee did adopt the practice of promoting an annual week-long Home event, and it remained a major structuring tool for the committee's work between 1930 and 1951. Each year the Christianize the Home Committee chose a topic for Home Week, which became the focus of that year's literature collection and production and generally resulted in the publication of some combination of books, pamphlets, and posters. In addition, the Home Committee often published suggested schedules for the Home Week's activities, which was available for purchase by local groups, and which gave suggested activities, topics for sermons, and outlines for worship services. But all of these activities began

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[26] *ZQJX di'er jie nianhui baogao,* 147-8; *ZQJX disan jie nianhui baogao,* 99.

only years after the 1924 report in which we find their roots. It took several years before the group had the personnel, the focus, and the experience to execute this project on a yearly basis. In short, the organization took some time to mature and find the scope and focus of its work.

Nonetheless, the Home Committee did quite a lot to establish itself as a viable, well-connected organization in those first few years. By 1925 it had accumulated a list of twenty-two published works on a number of topics: the nature of family/the ideal family form, marriage, the role(s) of women, childrearing, hygiene, infant care, finances, and family worship. The list deals with several of the subjects set out for research in 1923, but it was just the beginning of the Home Committee's effort at publication. Six new volumes were planned for the following year, including a hymnal, an abridged Bible, a set of children's games and stories, and books on children's health and psychology, the ancient Chinese sages' views on family, Bible teachings on family, and home décor.[27]

In 1924, You Shuxun had urged Home Committee members to see to the establishment of family education societies.[28] By 1925, the Committee had outlined a three-pronged plan of attack for Home work, utilizing three different types of organization: local churches would form parents' clubs, schools would hold classes and extracurricular activities about family life, and local churches would form Home Committees to be a resource and connection to the national committee. The Home Committee had a specific set of tasks in mind for each of these three types of organization, which would work to train and influence both children and adults. The

[27] *ZQJX disan jie nianhui baogao,* 98-100.
[28] *ZQJX di'er jie nianhui baogao,* 148.

central Committee set its own goals for the 1925-6 year as first, to promote home religious education and the practice of family worship, and second, to identify the best family leisure activities so as to promote wholesome recreation.[29]

Promoting wholesome recreation was a popular approach to a fear about the ills of society and their deleterious effects upon family and public morals. One man from Tianjin came up with a plan to raise one thousand *yuan* per year for three years to support appropriate recreation for the family by opposing prostitution, gambling, and concubinage. This plan was based on the idea that a proper, healthy, happy family life would prevent the ills of society, and that obstructing these evils would also strengthen the family.[30] In a time when slogans about saving the nation abounded, the Home Committee promoted a hope that the family in general and the Christian family in particular could be a panacea for China's social and national ills.[31]

Figure 1.1: The Christian Home Club of Shanghai Baptist College

[29] *ZQJX disan jie nianhui baogao,* 99.
[30] Ibid., 31.
[31] Schneider, *Keeping the Nation's House*, 21; Glosser, *Chinese Visions of Family and State,* 3-4.

An example of a local group connected to the Home Committee reveals the Committee's relevance to the intellectual movements of the early- to mid-1920s. The young men of the Shanghai Baptist College Christian Home Club were among the ranks of those who felt that Christian families could strengthen their nation. The club had two purposes: "to regenerate the homes of the parents, and to establish new Christian homes." Both Christians and non-Christians joined. Those who were already Christian hoped to find help converting their families. But as one Westerner described the group, "all the young men, whether Christian or not, longed to make their homes more like the ideal that had come to them through their study of homes in Christian lands."[32] The photograph of the club depicts a serious-faced group of young men, some in western garb, others in scholarly robes (See figure 1.1). The one woman in the photo is Mrs. Zheng Zhangcheng (Mrs. C. C. Chen); she and Miao Qiusheng (Chester Miao), current and past members of the NCC's Home Committee respectively, were the club's advisors. The young men in this club styled themselves revolutionary intellectuals in the two-paragraph statement accompanying their photo in their yearbook:

> One component of social revolution is family reform, because family is the basic unit of society. If the family is decayed and dark, then society will be directly affected. So family and society are as roots and branches, closely related. We absolutely cannot let the old form of family – the fiery pit – remain, and simultaneously achieve utopia; that is impossible!
>
> Seen in this way, family problems can all be taken as society's problems, but when carefully examined, they are all individuals' problems. We ambitious youth – who among us does not plan to establish a happy, harmonious, ideal Christian family? But in this transitional time, many young men, because of a lack of careful study and good standards, have already lost so much! For this reason the Hujiang College Christian Home

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[32] Mrs. F.J. White, "The 'Christian Home Club' of the Shanghai Baptist College." *China Sunday School Journal* VI.5 (May 1918), 1005-6.

> Club, seeking revolution, spares no effort in discussing family problems (like education, hygiene, inheritance, industry, recreation, marriage, religion, public cemeteries, etc.), in seeking for an appropriate resolution that suits the trends of the world today, as well as the social environment."[33]

The term "youth" (*qingnian*) used in this quote marked these young men as independent thinkers and political actors.[34] Using the language of revolution, club members identified themselves with the class of young intellectuals who were becoming a force to be reckoned with on the intellectual and political scene in urban China.[35]

By 1925, the leaders of the Home Committee had established the basis for its work. They had not only the allegiance of small local groups like the Shanghai Baptist College's Christian Home Club, but also promises of cooperation from three important organizations: the Nanjing Higher Education Committee, and the national committees for the YMCA and YWCA respectively.[36] The work that the Committee had claimed justified its involvement in education, family spirituality, and church, and it had an eclectic publishing trajectory. The Home Committee was gaining institutional stability by 1925, but by this time heightened anti-Christian agitation had been stirring in Chinese cities for three years. In 1927, a surge in the violence of anti-Christian activity caused some to doubt even the viability of Protestant Christianity within Chinese society.

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[33] Zhu Yasong, "Jidu jiating ganqin hui" [The Christian Home Club], *Hujiang niankan* 10, 1925, 156. The title of this yearbook page was in English, but the text was in Chinese.
[34] Marion J. Levy, *The Family Revolution in Modern China* (Harvard University Press, 1949; New York: Antheneum, 1968), 84-5, 90, 92, 294. Citations refer to the 1968 edition.
[35] Shirley Garrett indicates that it was a term with some cachet; hence its use by the Young Men's Christian Association (abbreviated *qingnian hui*). Garrett, *The Chinese Y.M.C.A.,* 81. The Communist Party built its organization on such youth (Levy, *Family Revolution*, 297); it was with the communist party that the YMCA ended up competing in the 1920s for the support of the youth (Garrett, *The Chinese Y.M.C.A.*, 183).
[36] *ZQJX disan jie nianhui baogao*, 98.

Responding to the Anti-Christian Movement

In 1927 the Home Committee, which that year was renamed the Committee on Christianizing the Home (*Jiduhua jiating weiyuanhui*), reported to the NCC that its ambitious goals for the previous year had been thwarted due in part to "the disordered state of the country."[37] The disordered state of the country referred, in part, to the political division that had prevented the formation of a single viable government since 1916. In 1926 Chiang Kaishek had begun the Northern Expedition, a military and diplomatic mission to unify the Chinese nation. In March 1927, anti-Christian sentiment among parts of the Northern Expeditionary forces erupted into violence. This disorder was, for many Christians, nothing short of game-changing.

The anti-Christian violence of 1927 left many Christians deeply unsettled, but anti-Christian sentiment had been building for the previous several years. In the early 1920s, a shift in anti-Christian sentiment occurred. Anti-Christian organizations now focused less on conflicts between faith and science, and more on Christianity's links to an oppressive capitalist class.[38] Christians participated in such discussions; the NCC had a committee devoted to exploring how to Christianize international relations, and an industrial relations committee explored labor problems.[39] But recognizing education as the key to raising up an enlightened citizenship, ready to strengthen and save China,

[37] *NCC Annual Report 1926-27,* 88, 143. I have located no report from 1926.
[38] Lewis Hodous, "The Anti-Christian Movement in China," *The Journal of Religion* 10.4 (Oct. 1930), 490; Tatsuro Yamamoto and Sumiko Yamamoto, "The Anti-Christian Movement in China, 1922-1927," *The Far Eastern Quarterly* 12.2 (1953), 144. For some context on anti-Christian movements before this period, see Paul A. Cohen, "The Anti-Christian Tradition in China," *The Journal of Asian* Studies 20.2 (1961), and Jessie G. Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions: The Anti-Christian Movements of 1920-28* (Notre Dame, IN: Cross Cultural Publications, 1988), 19-20.
[39] *NCC Annual Report 1923-24*, 2.

many Chinese reformers chafed at the disproportionate influence held by Christians in the education systems. Chinese elites also felt concern over growth in the increasing number of other social programs run by Protestant missions after World War I. According to Lutz, the data collected in the service of these projects showed a level of Christian influence alarming to Chinese nationalists, who saw Christians as in competition with Chinese social service and education institutions.[40]

In 1922 a Christian survey report, *The Christian Occupation of China,* enflamed anti-Christian ire. Daniel Bays refers to this title as “a public relations disaster.” Especially in the wake of the May Fourth demonstrations, which had inaugurated an upswing in antiimperialist nationalism, a report describing China’s geography in terms of areas already “claimed” by mission stations was not well-calculated to win Chinese hearts. That year, in light of this affront and in advance of the international meeting of the World Student Christian Federation planned for April at Qinghua University, angry students created anti-Christian organizations.[41]

Men of such socialist fame as Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao participated in anti-Christian organizations, in which communists were clearly involved. Indeed, one group used the Russian term “anti-Christian week” to name a movement they scheduled for Christmas week of 1924. This movement, which is an ironic parallel to the Christianize the Home Weeks to follow, held meetings in several locations in Guangdong and

[40] Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions*, 7-8, 40.
[41] Hodous, “Anti-Christian Movement,” 489-90; Bays, *New History*, 109. Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions*, 42.

Shanghai. Christmastime anti-Christian demonstrations were planned again the following two years and executed, sometimes accompanied by violence, in multiple cities.[42]

In the spring of 1925, protestors took to the streets in Shanghai in response to the addition of four by-laws to the Shanghai Municipal Council's regulations, including child labor laws that YWCA "foreign social reformers" had pushed for. Protests led to more protests, as first Japanese, then British forces fired on demonstrators. Eleven eventually died of gunshot wounds from British Sikh forces on May 30, and the country exploded in nationalist outrage. Protestors held strikes in thirty-eight cities and boycotted Japanese and British goods for months.[43]

The shootings that became known as the May Thirtieth Incident and the anti-imperialist nationalist rage that erupted afterward inspired a deepening of anti-Christian sentiment, leading many students to withdraw from mission schools.[44] Some people left Christianity altogether, and others altered their affiliations. One of these was You Shuxun, who had given a speech urging formation of family religious education societies at the 1924 Home Committee meeting. At the time of the May Thirtieth Incident, You was thirty-three years old. He had been born into a poor Wenzhou Christian family and started his career as a bamboo artisan like his father, then went on to attend the Nanjing Theological Seminary (*Nanjing Jinling Shenxueyuan*). In 1920 he was ordained a pastor and went to work in a Methodist congregation, Wenzhou Western Church. In 1925, You

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[42] Hodous, "Anti-Christian Movement," 491-3; Yamamoto and Yamamoto, "Anti-Christian Movement," 135-6, 144-5. The Cold War context of this study notwithstanding, Yamamoto and Yamamoto's evidence for important Communist influence in anti-Christian agitation is clear and compelling.
[43] Garner, Karen. "Redefining Institutional Identity: The YWCA Challenge to Extraterritoriality in China, 1925-1930," in Anne-Marie Brady and Douglas Brown, eds., *Foreigners and Foreign Institutions in Republican China* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 73-4.
[44] Yamamoto and Yamamoto, "Anti-Christian Movement," 135-6.

happened to be in Shanghai for the annual NCC conference when protests were occurring. Excited by what he saw, You went back to Wenzhou, assembled a group of like-minded Chinese colleagues, and approached a supervising missionary with three demands. The missionary, James W. Heywood, refused their demands and blamed the whole upheaval on the Chinese. Deeply disappointed, You left the Methodist church and established an independent church *(zilihui)* on July 26. Just over a year later, You joined the Chinese Communist Party. He went on secret missions to the countryside where in addition to his undercover communist work, he also gave sermons in the churches.[45]

The May Thirtieth Incident occasioned an awakening for many foreigners in China. One such was Helen Thoburn, an American secretary to the YWCA who had been an editor of the 1922 National Christian Conference report.[46] Thoburn recalled that at the NCC meeting a week before the May 30 demonstrations, some of the Chinese council members had tried to make the Westerners understand the depth of their feelings of opposition to extraterritoriality and the military presence of foreigners in China: "Sometimes when I think back to it I feel as if that meeting had sat there in sort of a trance … while a few prophetic Chinese were trying to get it to wake up and see what a tide of feeling was mounting in China." One of those impassioned Chinese colleagues might well have been You Shuxun.

Thoburn and others in the YWCA were led by the May Thirtieth Incident to rethink their relationship to the Chinese people. One American secretary wrote, "The

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[45] Shen Jia, *Riguang zhixia: Su Huilian he ta de shidai* [Under the sun: William Edward Soothill and his era]. Taipei: Xin rui wen chuang, 2012, 424-6.

[46] "Daily Proceedings," in Frank Rawlinson, Helen Thoburn, and D. MacGillivray, eds., *The Chinese Church as Revealed in the National Christian Council*, 29.

terrific question put to every group was: Are you Chinese or foreign? The Y.W.C.A. has answered, 'We are Chinese.'" The YWCA changed its approach to reform in order to better reflect their priority with a "new approach to identifying the needs of working class women" formulated and led by Chinese secretaries.[47] The YMCA was similarly galvanized to action by the May Thirtieth Incident, finally abandoning its long-contested political neutrality. Like the YWCA, the YMCA published manifestos in support of the protestors. Western secretaries joined their Chinese colleagues in raising their voices against the injustice of the Incident. Still, the YMCA was accused of being run by the West, and sometime Chinese secretaries showed hostility toward foreign staff within the Association.[48]

Like the YWCA and the YMCA, the NCC raised its voice in protest against the May Thirtieth Incident and the extraterritoriality at the root of it. In July, *Dongfang zazhi* (The Eastern Miscellany) published a special issue about the May Thirtieth Incident in which the NCC published an open letter to the Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC). The NCC's letter emphasized its own transnational composition: "The National Christian Council of China… convened a meeting of its Executive Council, composed of both Chinese and foreigners, to discuss ways to respond to the incident, and those of all nations who attended the meeting felt deeply pained about this inhumane tragedy…" Subtly poking at the SMC's exclusion of Chinese from its governing board, the NCC set itself in contrast to that board, stating, "This association's organization and goals are international in nature, and toward this type of incident which is so closely related to

[47] Garner, "YWCA Challenge," 74, 76-7. Secretary Mary Dingman's words are quoted in Garner's article.
[48] Garret, *The Chinese Y.M.C.A.,*166, 176-8.

international goodwill and which so influences the relationships between Chinese and foreign people in this locality and throughout the country, we cannot but represent our views to the esteemed Council."[49] This public statement was likely sincere, but it was also shrewd politics, putting the NCC in a different category from imperialist organizations under fire. The July letter was signed by the NCC's executive secretary Luo Yansheng and its chairman Yu Rizhang (David Yui). Yu, who was also in YMCA leadership, had cabled John Mott of the United States YMCA, urging him to raise his own protest to the "highest authorities" about the Incident.[50] Clearly Yu perceived a link between foreign mission powers-that-be and foreign governments and believed that foreign governments would care about the success of mission endeavors. Such was the complex relationship between political and religious power that even in trying to support the separation of the one from the other, Chinese church leaders relied on those links.[51]

The May Thirtieth Incident and its aftermath affected the whole milieu in which the Home Committee worked. When foreign Christian workers in China recognized the validity of Chinese anti-imperialism and anti-foreignism and fought their own ethnocentrism, they were continuing the liberalizing processes embraced at the inception of the NCC, and in the 1910 Edinburgh conference. The May Thirtieth Incident inspired many NCC affiliates to a new level of critical introspection. In November 1925, a

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[49] Yu Rizhang and Luo Yansheng, "Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui zhi gongbuju han" [Letter from the National Christian Council of China to the Shanghai Municipal Council], *Dongfang zazhi*, no. 22 (July 1925), 19-20. SMA, D2-0-2981-192.

[50] Garrett, *The Chinese Y.M.C.A.*, 178.

[51] Paul A. Varg argues that missionaries actually lacked a clear influence in American politics; they were too divided themselves. Summarized in John K. Fairbank, "Introduction: The Many Faces of Protestant Missions in China and the United States," in *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 17-18.

missionary named Harley Farnsworth MacNair gave a speech to the Shanghai Missionary Association entitled "Four Ages of Crisis for the Chinese Christian Church," in which he drew lessons from previous Christian crises in the Tang, Yuan, and Ming dynasties respectively. Christianity's current crisis had been precipitated by a long pattern in the actions and strategies of Protestant missionaries starting as early as Robert Morrison. MacNair framed his discussion with a quote from Brutus in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*: "There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life is bound in shallows and in miseries." He may have counted on his listeners knowing the next line of Brutus speech, in which a greater warning yet is voiced: "On such a full sea are we now afloat; and we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures." MacNair may also have expected his listeners to connect Brutus's language about tides and currents with the language of such New Culture intellectuals as Luo Jialun, who in the 1919 inaugural issue of his magazine entitled *New Tide* (*Xinchao)* wrote about the pulling tides of different historical periods. They might similarly have known the language of Cai Yuanpei, who in 1920 wrote: "I think there is something to be said for calling the tide of new thought a 'great flood.' It is, after all, like a deluge that has washed away the habits of the past, and naturally there are those who find this very painful…. If the wild beasts can be quelled and the floodwaters run free, China will immediately find peace."[52] The sense that, like Brutus, Christians stood on a watershed of historical import is infused through MacNair's injunction to his

[52] Chow Tse-tsung, *The May Fourth Movement,* 60-61, 173-74; Cai Yuanpei, "Floodwaters and Wild Beasts," in Geremie Barmé and Linda Jaivin, eds., *New Ghosts, Old Dreams: Chinese Rebel Voices* (New York: Times Books, 1992), 342-43.

fellow missionaries to take the Chinese people seriously, to explore all sides of the political situation, and to cooperate.[53]

Where the YMCA had hesitated to engage politically, the NCC took pride in doing so. A 1926 NCC report written for a British audience described the anti-Christian movement of 1922 and the May Thirtieth Incident as the two great crises for Christianity since the NCC's formation. "In both cases," the report claimed confidently, "the Council has justified itself by the way in which it has met the situation." After the May Thirtieth Incident, the NCC considered separating Chinese and Western Christian bodies to protect Chinese church leaders from accusations of being lackeys of imperialists; the decision not to take such a course was a testament to Chinese Christians' belief in the ideal of Christian catholicity. The group's cooperative reassessment of their Christian mission "has been made possible because in the National Christian Council these men and women had learned to love and understand one another, to act together, to pray together, to believe in God Who by His Holy Spirit would lead them into all truth. It has been possible because there is a body through which the Christian sentiment of China can find expression as with one voice."[54] In the wake of crisis, the NCC reaffirmed its transnational character as a source of both institutional and religious strength.

For some, the NCC was indeed a place of cooperative interchange. Even You Shuxun, who left the Methodist church and joined the Communist Party in the wake of

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[53] Mai Kena (Harley Farnsworth MacNair), "Zhongguo Jidujiao sida weiji shiqi" [Critical Moments in the History of Christianity in China], talk given at the Shanghai Missionary Association, November 3, 1925. Shanghai: National Christian Council, 1, 10-11. SMA, U123-0-6-252.
[54] Henry T. Hodgkin. *The National Christian Council of China*. Reprint from C.M. Review, March 1926. (London: William Clowes and Sons, Limited, n.d.), 9-12. SMA, U123-0-6-44.

the May Thirtieth Incident, retained his affiliation with the NCC and was active in the Home Committee's work years down the line.[55] But the statement that the NCC was in all things unanimous strains credulity. In fact, evidence to the contrary can be found in *The National Christian Council: A Five Years' Review, 1922-1927.* This report notes that some criticized and attacked the NCC for taking a political stance in its 1925 letter to the SMC and in its later denunciation of extraterritorial rights enjoyed by Westerners in China. The NCC stated that it had acted under the understanding that its decisions were approved by its members. But additional instances of division and criticism were laid out in this document, showing that the five years since the NCC's founding and the upswing in anti-Christian action had been eventful and challenging even within the NCC.[56]

Notwithstanding NCC efforts to respond sensitively to public opinion and repudiate the imperialism with which Christians had been labeled, the immediate outcome of the May Thirtieth Incident was a net gain for anti-Christian sentiment. Starting in the summer of 1926 popular enthusiasm for Chiang Kai-shek's Northern Expedition turned into harassment and violence against Christians.[57] In March, the Northern Expedition troops entered Nanjing and seized foreign property. Some Christians, foreign and Chinese, were treated roughly, some were killed, and buildings were looted. Jessie Lutz remarks that the loss of life and property seems remarkably

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[55] You helped plan the Home Committee's regional leadership conference in 1930. *Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui Huadong qu Jiduhua jiating yundong lingxiu yanjiuhui baogaoshu* (Report of the East China Conference for Leaders of the Christianizing the Home Movement). Shanghai, National Christian Council of China: 1931, 7. SMA, U123-0-161.
[56] *The NCC: A Five Years' Review*, 21-3, 29-30.
[57] Bays, *New History*, 112.

small for such a densely populated place in a time of civil war. Nonetheless these events had an immense effect on morale among Christians in China.[58]

In 1929, the NCC's Executive Committee reported "a widespread spiritual depression and sense of exhaustion. Uncertainty as to the future of the Christian religion has disheartened some, and a lack of spiritual energy and glow makes others unable to move forward." The report mentions a decrease in number of Chinese Christians in addition to a decrease in missionaries, and states that various types of Christian work had been severely disrupted by the anti-Christian attacks.[59] Though many of the missionaries who had left after the attacks returned to China in 1928 and 1929, the total number of missionaries remained about twenty-five percent lower than it had been.[60] While in 1925 the Home Committee had twenty-two members, in 1927 it had only eleven.[61] This loss of personnel held symbolic weight in addition to its practical problems; absences and shrinking numbers must have served as reminders of the frailty of the Christian cause.

Regrouping After the Anti-Christian Crisis

The blow to staffing and morale necessitated a period of recovery for the NCC. The NCC found inspiration for the next stage of its work in the Jerusalem meeting of the International Missionary Council (IMC) in 1928. This conference strove to overcome

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[58] Lutz, *Chinese Politics and Christian Missions*, 215-16, 220-21, 232-3. The hypocrisy of panicked missionaries who fled to gunboats after decrying extraterritoriality did not help Christian public relations.
[59] *Interpretive Report of the Executive Committee, Seventh Annual Meeting – National Christian Council, May 18-25, 1929*, 3. MRL 6: National Christian Council of China Records, series 1, box 1, folder 4, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.
[60] Bays, *New History*, 112, 124-5.
[61] *ZQJX disan jie nianhui baogao*, 158; *NCC Annual Report 1926-27*, 143.

what scholar of missiology Jerald Gort calls “the colonial legacy of racist domination.” As part of this effort, conference organizers invited constituent members to appoint extra voting members to the conference. Conservative boards feared that many would be non-Westerners, and that power would shift quickly toward the “younger churches,” but in the end, the non-Western delegates to the conference only represented about twenty percent of the total attendees. The conference was still hailed, by those amenable to such change, as a significant step toward true ecumenism, as it invited Christians of all nations to meet together as equals.

The terms “younger” and “older,” which the conference employed to refer to non-Western and Western churches respectively, represent a conscious effort to level the playing field and undo old racial and national hierarchies. Attendees sought to recenter Christian work on the local church, rather than continue setting up missions and churches as competing seats of authority. They discussed but rejected the idea of ceasing financial support from older churches to younger. Instead the conference embraced the idea of a “genuine” partnership between Christian churches the world over, meaning that the older churches could give financial support, but the receiving churches would retain freedom of interpretation and expression.[62]

In 1929, the NCC ratified a new constitution that reflected many of the philosophies expressed at the Jerusalem IMC meeting. The new constitution made the relationship between the constituent bodies and the Council more concrete by “shifting from the indirectly representative basis of 1922 to [a] directly representative basis.”

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[62] Jerald D. Gort. “Jerusalem 1928: Mission, Kingdom and Church,” *International Review of Mission* 67.267 (July 1978), 273-4, 278, 281.

Under the new constitution, missionary agencies agreed to be represented on the NCC only through the Chinese churches, not directly, as previously. While they would still be called upon for direct financial support to the NCC, only the churches they served would have voting powers.[63] In essence, this was a demotion of the missionary councils and a promotion of local churches.

In this moment when energy was returning to the Christian movement after the devastating anti-Christian movements but when a sense of vulnerability remained, the NCC arranged a special new effort to "hasten the fulfillment of Christ's great commission, to foster more Christlike living among the members of the church, and to meet the deep religious needs of the people." They asked that NCC affiliates "and all Christian bodies and organizations in China unite, individually and cooperatively, in carrying out a Five Year Program of Evangelism, beginning January 1, 1930." This Five Year Movement had two goals: first, "The cultivation among Christians of a deeper knowledge of Christ, of a more intimate fellowship with Him, and of a more courageous following of Him in all the relationships of life," and second, evangelization with the goal of doubling church membership.[64] The NCC's Executive Committee self-appointed as the Committee of the Five Year Movement and determined six lines of work upon which the FYM would proceed: "Religious Education, Christianizing the Home, Literacy Campaign, Retreat and Evangelism, Work among Young People, and Stewardship." The Executive Council announced in 1931 that churches that had ratified the Five Year

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[63] *Interpretive Report of the Executive Committee*, 1, 7, 8.
[64] *Report of Commission I – Extensive Evangelistic Movement: Annual Meeting – National Christian Council, 1928-1929,* 1. MRL 6: National Christian Council of China Records, series 1, box 1, folder 4, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Movement already represented 230,925 believers, and not all votes were in.[65] Making the individual church member the unit counted was a subtle expression of the NCC's determination to democratize church leadership. It focused on a constituency determined and reached through the churches.

The Home Committee's recovery after the shock of anti-Christian violence was aided by the arrival of a new general secretary. In 1928, the committee welcomed Guan Cuizhen to that position with an almost palpable sense of relief. The Executive Committee's report on staffing indicates that Guan had come to Shanghai in June of 1928 and began working for the NCC full-time in September. Guan's presence clearly had a powerful effect; the previous year's demoralizing single paragraph report explaining the Committee's failure to accomplish anything of note is far outstripped by the meaty report given in 1928. Regarding their goals for publications to promote literacy and family values, the committee wrote: "we have been unable to take care of it because of the lack of a full-time secretary. Now that the NCC has appointed a lady secretary, this work can progress properly."[66]

Publishing became a greater strength of the Home Committee's work as it pressed forward after the anti-Christian campaigns. Inspired by discussions at the Jerusalem Meeting of the IMC in 1928, one of the Committee's goals in 1928 was to start a family magazine of the quality of the thousand-character literacy lessons.[67] These popular

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[65] *Report of the Executive Committee, Biennial Meeting – National Christian Council, 1929-1931*, 1-3. MRL 6: National Christian Council of China Records, series 1, box 1, folder 12, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.
[66] *ZQJX diliu jie nianhui baogao*, 49.
[67] Ibid.

lessons were designed by a YMCA reformer, James Yen, to teach adults basic literacy. The Home Committee wanted to provide women who had gone through Yen's lessons a body of useful reading material suited to their literacy level. It believed that some of the greatest problems facing women and families were that "women lack education and common knowledge," and "women lack the habit of reading books and papers," so the Committee continued to grow into its role as a clearinghouse, resolving in 1929 to compile a list of reference books on the home to circulate to local church leaders.[68] They worked in conjunction with the Religious Education Committee of the NCC, which appealed to the NCC for help publishing and promoting materials on family problems.[69]

Early in 1928, the Committee had already agreed that the scope of family problems was too broad to allow all to be successfully addressed. In 1928, they planned to focus their research on a single topic: How Christian families should use the Spring Festival holiday.[70] This focus on Christianizing Chinese holidays resonated with debates about combining Chinese and Christian cultural practices, which I discuss in detail in the next three chapters of this dissertation. By 1929 the Committee was able to report that they had published a book called "Outline and Suggestions for Holding New Year's Worship, and for Church Members' New Year Celebrations" and sent it to the churches

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[68] *Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui diqi jie nianhui baogao* [Seventh Annual Report of the National Christian Council of China]. Shanghai: NCC, 1929, 50. SMA, U123-0-18-200.
[69] Ibid., 51; *Report of Commission III – Religious Education: Annual Meeting – National Christian Council, 1928-1929,* 172. MRL 6: National Christian Council of China Records, series 1, box 1, folder 4, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.
[70] *ZQJX diliu jie nianhui baogao*, 49.

of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Anhui, Hong Kong and Guangdong, along with another book called "Home – The Testing Ground for Heaven."[71]

By 1929, the new secretary of the NCC, Guan Cuizhen, had visited thirteen cities and towns throughout eastern and southern China, seeking information about the types of home work already in process and the local churches' needs and circumstances.[72] According to a pamphlet written by Guan Cuizhen entitled *The Five Year Movement and Christianizing the Home*, five regional retreats of the NCC each unanimously approved the program of the FYM prior to its announcement at the nationwide NCC conference in May 1929. Guan's pamphlet heralded the democratizing effects of those regional conferences and the NCC's new constitution: "Inasmuch as the Five Year Movement is approved by the representatives of all the churches, it belongs to the church members themselves. Its success is dependent not on the effort of a small member of church leaders or any portion of the church body, but on everyone (sic) of the 400,000 Christians of China."[73] Guan's celebration of collective ownership and action is linked with the driving principle of the Christianize the Home movement; both relied on the notion that what happened in individuals – and, *especially* relevant here, the family – had reverberations throughout church and society.

In line with the new start promised by the Five Year Movement, the Home Committee started a new program in 1930 that would be a means of influencing local pastors and church leaders' work for the next twenty years: the Christianize the Home

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[71] *ZQJX diqi jie nianhui baogao*, 51.
[72] Ibid., 49-51.
[73] Kuan, T.C. (Guan Cuizhen), *The Five Year Movement and Christianizing the Home*, 1. HDSXY. Quotes are from English translation from an unknown source, found with the pamphlet in Huadong Shenxueyuan.

Movement Week *(Jiduhua jiating yundong zhou).* The first Home Week was held in late October that year. In conjunction with a literature committee, the Committee published a guide for parents that local leaders could use to help with the Home Week. In December a regional conference for the Christianize the Home Committee decided to repeat the Home Week the following year, and by the spring 1931 NCC conference, the Home Committee had decided to make the Home Week an annual affair. They published and sold 4,000 copies of their materials in 1931. The following year they sold 6,000 copies, and planned for 8,000 in 1933, on topics pertaining to children's rights. Christianize the Home Week gave the Home Committee an opportunity to set the agenda for local work and to exert influence on local pastors.[74]

In its first two years, the Home Week publications seem to have provided a smorgasbord of family teachings. Topics published under the Home Committee's "lecture series" include "Devotional Life in the Home" (see figure 1.2),[75] "Christian Relationships in the Home," "Education in the Home," "Amusement in the Home," "Child Welfare in the Home," Economics in the Home," and "Sanitation in the Home." New talks on some of these topics were printed the next year, and to them were added "Guidance for Marriage," Testimony in the Home," "Literature in the Home," and "Prevention of Disease in the Home."[76] This broad range of topics was ambitious, and the

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[74] *Huadong qu Jiduhua jiating yundong lingxiu yanjiuhui baogaoshu*, 10-11; *Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui dijiu jie dahui baogao* [Ninth Conference Report of the National Christian Council of China]. Shanghai: NCC, 1933, 46. SMA, Y3-1-230.

[75] Bo Lan (A.R. Kepler), *Jiduhua jiating yundong zhou yanjian lunwen diyi zhong: Jiating zhong de lingxing peiyang* [Christian Home Week Lecture Series No. 1: Devotional Life in the Home] (Shanghai: NCC, 1930). Author's collection.

[76] *Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui Jiduhua Jiating Weiyuanhui* (NCC Christianize the Home Committee), ed. *Jiduhua jiating yundong kanwu mulu* [Available Printed Materials on Christianizing the

tiny pamphlets they produced were cheap (only 3 *fen*) and light, appropriate for printing in bulk and mailing long distances.

Figure 1.2: *Devotional Life in the Home,* 1930.

The Home Committee's new program received positive feedback. In addition to good sales of its published materials, the Home Committee's work inspired positive comments from Cheng Jingyi in "A Brief Review of the Christian Movement in China" that he gave at the 1931 NCC Conference. Cheng expressed hearty support for and belief in the Home movement. In a section that points to the family as "The Backbone of

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Home] (Shanghai: 1939). SMA U131-0-79; *Jiduhua jiating yundong zhou cailiao yinshu ji xiaoshou mudan* [Printing and Sale of Home Week Materials, 1930-1935]. SMA Q579-4-138, 151-2.

China," he said, "The family is the backbone of the national life of China. The old conception of the Chinese people bases their national life upon the family. Unfortunately, to no small extent among Christians the central position has been shifted from the home to the Church. … It is high time to recover this great loss and to realize again that it is the home for the training of religious life of the young rather than either the Church or the school, however great may be the services of these two important institutions." The church had become a focus rather than the mission, but Cheng affirmed the importance of women's leadership and of the home itself by affirming the home's importance even over the church.

Cheng went on to praise the fruits of the Home Committee's efforts. He praised the consciousness of the home's importance that had arisen recently, and declared: "The observance of a special Home Week amongst Christian people, the holding of a Leaders' Conference to consider problems affecting the home, the preparation and distribution of literature in various forms relating to problems of the home, have been universally received with delight and enthusiasm. … That in this endeavor we are touching one of the main springs of the life of China, is a fact that can hardly be doubted."[77] Cheng's endorsement of the home movement indicates that it likely had good support within the NCC. By praising the regional leadership conference of the Home Movement and the regular production of Home Week materials, Cheng acknowledged the Home Committee's strength and accomplishments.

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[77] Cheng Jingyi, *A Brief Review of the Christian Movement in China – Biennial Meeting of N.C.C., Hangchow, April 10-18, 1931,* 4-5. MRL 6: National Christian Council of China Records, series 1, box 1, folder 12, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

In 1932, the Home Committee entered a period of leadership musical chairs. Guan Cuizhen, the secretary of the committee, went to the United States to pursue advanced education, so hiring boards or churches donated a series of female leaders to the Home Committee. Finally Mrs. Eugenia Hsia Chen, a graduate of Columbia University with a specialization in Home Problems and Children's education, became full-time secretary. Chen only served for a year before having a child of her own, but shortly after, in the fall of 1934, Guan Cuizhen was due to return to China; she was offered the position of secretary again and accepted.[78] During her absence, the Home Committee elected a group of twenty-six Corresponding Secretaries (*tongxinyuan*) in thirteen regions. Their duties were to work with local groups to put the Home Committee's suggestions into action and to send criticisms and suggestions to the Home Committee.[79] The return of Guan Cuizhen and the end of the Five Year Movement provided useful watershed moments for the Home Committee to focus and clarify its work moving ahead.

In 1934, Chiang Kai-shek inaugurated the New Life Movement, a campaign that, on the surface, seems in line with many aspects of the Home Committee's work. But though the movement did enjoy the support of some Protestants, that support was far from universal. After its first year, the movement's momentum fell off as people felt it to be superficial in its aims and top-down in its promotion.[80] In 1937 the NCC discussed the New Life Movement at its national conference in response to a direct request from

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[78] *ZQJX dijiu jie dahui baogao,* 44-5; *National Christian Council of China Biennial Report 1933-35* (Shanghai: NCC, 1935), 66-67. SMA U123-0-20.
[79] *ZQJX dijiu jie dahui baogao,* 45-6.
[80] Samuel C. Chu, "The New Life Movement before the Sino-Japanese Conflict: A Reflection of Kuomintang Limitations in Thought and Action," in *China at the Crossroads: Nationalists and Communists, 1927-1949*, ed. F. Gilbert Chan (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980), 54, 57, 62, 64.

Chiang Kai-shek for Christian support. The lukewarm report concludes that the New Life Movement is trying to do what Christianity aimed to do, but did it poorly, with insufficient focus on spiritual transformation and without the central figure of Jesus involved.[81] Some of the new literature I examine in chapter five of this dissertation seems to have some links to ideas espoused in the New Life Movement, but I believe the New Life Movement had little, if any, impact on the Christianize the Home Movement, which had its own motivation and resources.

The Home Committee's Prewar Trajectory

In 1935, the NCC looked back to assess its Five Year Movement. Its report pointed out that the campaign's goals of increased spirituality and doubled church membership did not lend themselves to easy accomplishment or easy assessment. Spirituality is, of course, hard to measure in and of itself, so assessing Christians' success in that regard requires identification and analysis of other indicators of spiritual health or growth. In addition, the number of Christians in China was never established with any confidence at the beginning of the FYM, so even if good statistics on new converts over the course of the movement could be procured, the success or failure of the Movement to accomplish the doubling of numbers was well nigh impossible to determine. But these concerns either did not occur to those who launched the movement, or were not allowed

[81] *Report of a Memo on the New Life Movement, The Eleventh (Biennial) Meeting of the National Christian Council of China, Shanghai, May 5-11, 1937.* SMA, Q579-4-143, 94.

to outweigh the imperatives that propelled it forward; nor did they prevent those assessing the movement in 1935 from declaring it a success.[82]

In this moment of post-Five-Year Movement stock-taking, the NCC proposed forming a new body under the aegis of the NCC to coordinate and connect the work of the different churches and foster greater unity among them. This organization was to do for church work what the (recently renamed) China Christian Educational Association and the Council on Medical Missions were doing for Christian education and medical work, respectively. The group designed to oversee church work was called the Commission on the Life and Work of the Churches (hereafter, CLW).[83] All three new commissions avoided using the word "mission" in their titles, in line with the move discussed above in connection with the Jerusalem Conference toward emphasizing equality between "younger" and "older" churches.

A document published by the NCC entitled "The Commission on the Life and Work of the Churches: Its Scope and Program" addresses "life" and "work" separately. It describes the "Life of the Churches" as referring to spirituality in general, including the practice of prayer and Bible study as well as a sense that one had a divine stewardship over one's "personality, time and resources." In the description of "The Work of the Churches" we can see that this Commission was in many ways a catch-all for any Christian efforts that did not fit easily into categories of Medical or Education work. Some of its work was clearly ecclesiastical – for instance, under its aegis were such

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[82] *NCC of China Biennial Report 1933-35*, 71.
[83] Ibid., 14-15.

efforts as training of ministers, evangelistic campaigns – but other projects, like economic cooperatives, were less obviously linked to church per se.[84]

The "scope and program" of the CLW was stated to include the continuation of the Five Year Movement, with an emphasis on three arenas (the Home, youth, and rural work), and using three methods (evangelism, training of future church leaders, and "encouragement of Christian stewardship"). Its duties were right in line with those the NCC and the Home Committee described for themselves: to assist and promote the work of individual churches without attempting to do the work for them, and to prepare and circulate literature, acting as a clearing house.[85]

The Christianize the Home Committee's work fit well with both "life" and "works" aspects of the Commission. As chapter four of this dissertation will discuss, one of the Home Committee's aims was to increase the spirituality of Christians by promoting family worship. But the Home Committee's efforts in such areas as hygiene and literacy work, which have some overlap with, and as we have seen, merited cooperation with, both the commissions on education and medical work, also overlapped with a broad category of efforts that could be lumped under the term "rural work." In many ways, the Home Movement fit best under the catch-all Commission on the Life and Work of the Churches because it was itself a catch-all movement. It was this broad reach that made the Home Committee a platform for expansive female leadership.

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[84] *The Commission on the Life and Work of the Churches: Its Scope and Program* (NCC: Shanghai, April 17 1936). SMA, Q579-4-140, 22.
[85] Ibid.

At the 1935 Biennial Meeting, the NCC passed a resolution expressing "its profound conviction that the 1938 enlarged meeting of the International Missionary Council should be held in China."[86] The IMC accepted the NCC's invitation. Working toward this international conference became a focus for the staff of the NCC. Having this meeting, which had last been held in Jerusalem a decade earlier, hosted by one of the countries formerly described as the "mission field" symbolized all the progress in Christian thought and relationships of the last decade. The topic of the NCC's 1937 national meeting was chosen with the express intention of pointing the minds of participants toward the 1938 IMC meeting and toward the big questions that would be addressed there. "Accordingly, the theme on this occasion was 'The Church in a Changing Age' and the sub-topics for the work of four groups were, the life, the program, the cooperative work and the relationships of the Church."[87] Here we see the Committee on Life and Work as not just a new commission, but an embodiment of open questions about what the life of the church ought to be, and how best to realize it. Much work and thought went into the 1938 meeting – some logistical, of course, but much more of a theological and theoretical nature as Christians tried to adjust and attune their ideas about the place of Church in a world where fascism threatened and liberal ideals were leading to a repudiation of all relationships that smacked of imperialism.

The Home Committee also reassessed its work in 1935. Guan Cuizhen's return to the Home Committee in 1934 had much the same effect as her first arrival in 1928; it was

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[86] *NCC of China Biennial Report 1933-35,* 31.
[87] Ronald Rees, *Some Impressions of The Eleventh (Biennial) Meeting, Shanghai, May 5-11, 1937.* MRL6: National Christian Council of China Records, Series 1, Box 1, Folder 21, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

accompanied by a fresh sense of focus in the committee's work. The Home Committee focused on two main missions: promoting parent education, and extending Home Committee efforts to rural areas. A committee on rural home work was formed, including some members who had "special rural experience," and they prepared the 1935 Home Week materials together with T.H. Sun, the editor of a biweekly paper called *The Christian Farmer,* as "consulting editor."[88] The committee also began sending urban church leaders to the countryside to provide needed personnel for Home Week.[89]

The parent education aspect of the work flowered with a new Five Year Plan the Home Committee inaugurated in January of 1936. In September of that year, the first (optimistically named) Annual Meeting of the Christianize the Home Committee convened in Shanghai and drew up a plan. Called "Parent Education and the New China," this plan aimed to continue the trajectory that had been set by the NCC's 1930-1934 Five Year Movement. The Home Committee set its own trajectory for the five years to come, and outlined the following topics for yearly Home Week activities:

1936 – The Vocation of Parenthood
1937 – Preparation of youth for marriage
1938 – Children's character and development in the Christian family
1939 – Confucian relationships in a Christian family[90]

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[88] *NCC of China Biennial Report*, 67-8, 78.
[89] Kuan, T.C. (Guan Cuizhen). *Report of the Christianizing the Home Movement, 1935 and 1936. The Eleventh (Biennial) Meeting of the National Christian Council of China, Shanghai, May 5-11, 1937,* 1. SMA, Q579-4-143, 139-41.
[90] This is my translation from the Chinese report. *Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui Jiduhua jiating weiyuanhui diyi jie nianhui baogao: Wu nian jihua - fumu jiaoyu yu xin Zhongguo yundong* [National Christian Council of China Christianize the Home Committee first annual conference report: five-year plan – parent education and the new China movement] (Shanghai, 1936), 13. SMA, U123-0-37. I have used my translation here to call attention to the link to Confucianism in the term *lunchang* 倫常, and to emphasize the probability that this topic would have addressed Confucian assumptions or teachings about family relationships. The committee's own translation omitted the word "Confucian;" they used "relationships in the Christian home." *The Eleventh (Biennial) Meeting of the National Christian Council of China, Shanghai, May 5-11, 1937*, 2. SMA, Q579-4-143, 139-41.

1940 – The Christian family's contribution to the new China.[91]

These topics reflect a focus on parents' responsibilities that had been a long-standing part of the Home Committee's work. In 1924, for instance, You Shuxun urged parents to focus on their children, treating them as masters of their homes *(jiating zhuren)* and serving them. You described parents as the representatives of God to their children.[92] In their 1930 regional conference, among the five topics discussed and reported by small groups were "Christianizing parents," and another was "the religious training of children."[93] In 1933, the Home Week emphasized children's rights to physical safety, recreation, and moral training.[94]

The Home Committee was not alone in its focus on children and their rights; their priority reflected New Culture intellectuals' concerns as well. Increased focus on children and childhood was notable in the period between 1917 and 1937, with special emphasis placed on education and child psychology.[95] New Culture intellectual Zhou Zuoren, whose writing was central to debates about children's literature, framed the forerunners of his era as having discovered children in a way that their forebears were unable to do.[96] In so doing, Zhou ignored Qing progressive thinkers' focus on children,[97] rhetorically setting himself and progressives of his current era in contrast to a dramatically less-

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[91] *ZQJX Jiduhua jiating weiyuanhui diyi jie nianhui baogao,* 9-13; Kuan, T.C., *Report of the Christianizing the Home Movement, 1935 and 1936*, 2.
[92] *ZQJX disan jie nianhui baogao*, 55.
[93] *Huadong qu Jiduhua jiating yundong lingxiu yanjiuhui baogaoshu,* 30-78.
[94] *ZQJX dijiu jie dahui baogao*, 46-7.
[95] Wang Hao, *Xin wenhua yundong zhong "ertong de faxian"* [The "discovery of children" in the New Culture Movement] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2012), 82-3. Andrew Jones, *Developmental Fairy Tales: Evolutionary Thinking and Modern Chinese Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 103.
[96] Ibid., 112-13.
[97] Wang Hao, *Xin wenhua yundong zhong 'ertong de faxian';* Tillman, *Precocious Politics.* 2-12, 25-60.

enlightened past. Like orientalists and like Christians, he defined his own cohort in contrast to what they were not, rewriting the past in the act.

While positing a discovery of childhood overdramatizes the contrast between New Culture thinkers and their predecessors, social science research done by Olga Lang from 1935 to 1937 hints that significant changes in children's status were in fact occurring. Certainly many educational materials continued to teach an overwhelming ethic of filial piety (as in the children's story about the baby bird that flies far and wide to find food to feed its mother), but Lang's survey results showed a growing sense among children that they had rights as well as duties in their families.[98] Meanwhile groups like the Home Committee sought to train for a more child-centric approach to family, teaching respect for the agency and individuality of children.[99]

The Home Committee's emphasis on parent education was not just about facilitating family happiness, or even raising healthy, happy children. Parenting had been identified as the crucial engine of cultural transmission and character formation. The committee's announcement of the new Five Year Plan queried, "Isn't the future of the nation… in the hands of today's parents?" Asserting an alternate hypothesis to the New Culture accusations that Confucian patriarchy was responsible for all of China's ills, the Home Committee went on to say, "But 80% of us Chinese have not received regular

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[98] Olga Lang, *Chinese Family and Society* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1946; Taipei, Taiyi caise yingshua gongsi, 1978), x, 244, 256-8, 337-8. Citations refer to the 1978 edition. The question of whether Lang's observations represent real trends or perceptions of changes that were influenced by assumptions of dramatic social change like Zhou's is complicated by the nature of Lang's narrative on children, which is primarily presented anecdotally. Her data on corporal punishment of children is very systematically presented, but she cannot compare it with earlier practices in a similarly systematic way, lacking parallel data from earlier decades.
[99] E.g. Irma Highbaugh, *What Should be the Attitude of Christians Toward Their Children? Parent Education Series Unit II.* Shanghai: Christian Literature Society, 1935.

education, let us not even speak of education or planning for the instruction of parents! Now we are to the point where the foundation of the nation is declining and the people are listless and in low spirits, and *this* is one of the biggest reasons for China's long-standing weakness!"[100]

By asserting the need for parent education in order that children could be prepared for a good life – building strong character and relationships, being prepared for marriage, and ready to serve the New China – the Home Committee echoed aspects of what Helen Schneider refers to as "the ideology of the happy family." This ideology guided women to manage their households and families in healthy ways, for example, by regulating their husband's emotions so as to encourage his productivity, raising their children according to principles of child psychology, and keeping the home life clean and orderly. Schneider cites Li Guanfang, a Home Committee leader whose play I discuss in chapter five, as an example of a hygiene reformer. The Christianize the Home Movement was promoted in a period of family reform and modernization; it sought to fulfill the same desires that the New Life Movement, Li Guanfang's housecleaning movement, and other social and intellectual campaigns tried to address: proper family relationships, a healthy and energetic younger generation, and the nation's strength. Wrapped up in these needs was a religious ideal – the sense that divine inspiration and God-given teachings would lead to unselfishness and enable discipline, allowing relationships and home practices to

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[100] Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui Jiduhua jiating weiyuanhui [Christianize the Home Committee of the National Christian Council of China], "'Fumu jiaoyu yu xin Zhongguo' wunian jihua xuanyan" [Announcement of the Five Year plan for "Parent education and the new China"], in *ZQJX Huadong qu Jiduhua jiating yundong lingxiu yanjiuhui baogaoshu*, 1-2. Emphasis mine.

improve; that somehow a Christian Home could be a meeting place for all the best things that any number of religious, cultural, and scientific teachings could offer.

The Best-Laid Plans

After the 1937 NCC conference, Ronald Rees rejoiced in the church's strength. "A year ago (in the spring of 1936) when we decided to recommend Hangchow as the place of meeting for the IMC," Rees wrote, "we faced the possibility of not being able actually to carry out our plan for meeting there. A year ago there was despair in many hearts; to-day there is self-confidence and determination." Sadly, just a few weeks later the formal beginnings of war with Japan ushered in a very different reality than what Rees foresaw. Military conflict began in Beijing, were redirected to Shanghai, and overtook Nanjing in a series of events that climaxed with the atrocious Rape of Nanking. The Hangzhou Conference of 1938 never happened; with China in the throes of war, the IMC met instead in Madras, India. For all the high hopes at the 1937 conference, it would be nine and a half years before the NCC held another national meeting.[101]

The war disrupted plans for the IMC conference and necessitated major restructuring of NCC offices and functions, but it did not stop the Home Committee. It persisted in preparing and publishing Home Week materials through the war.[102] By their choices of topics to address we get occasional glimpses indicating that the Home Committee was responding to their wartime circumstances. In 1936, the Christianize the

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[101] *Proceedings of the Twelfth Biennial Meeting of the National Christian Council.* (National Christian Council: 1946), 13. SMA, U123-0-21.
[102] *Proceedings of the Twelfth Biennial Meeting of the NCC*, 16-17.

Home Committee had planned out its next five Home Week topics. In 1939, they had planned to focus their Christianize the Home Week on the topic "Confucian Family Relationships in a Christian Family," which might have included discussion of ancestor worship, or at least the relationships between older and younger generations. The war seems to have created a new set of priorities for the Home Committee, however, for in 1938-1939 the Home Week topic was "The Home in the Present Crisis." Sub-topics included "The Home and the Economic Crisis," "The Training of Children for Honesty, Truth, Loyalty, and Purity in Time of Crisis," and "Family Spiritual Life." In 1940, the theme for the Home Week was "Families of Strong Body, Mind, and Spirit," rather than the anticipated "The Christian family's contribution to the new China." The focus of the daily topics alternated between aspects of this topic and the application of such topics to children or to parenting.[103]

Analyzing the ideal of the Christian Home through the social change wrought by World War and revolution is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Instead, I aim to establish how the Home Committee got to where it was by the war's beginning. By the

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[103] *Jiduhua jiating yanjiuhui quannian chengxu: 1938.10 – 1939.10: jiating yu xiandai zhi weiji – chengxu er: jiating gongye de hezuo jihua* [Christianize the Home Study Group Year-long Program: October 1938 – October 1939: The Family in the Present Crisis – Program 2: Cooperative Planning for home industries.], (Christianize the Home Committee, 1938); *Jiduhua jiating yanjiuhui quannian chengxu: 1938.10 – 1939.10: jiating yu xiandai zhi weiji — chengxu san: feichang shiqi jiating jiaoyu duiyu ertong de zhongxin, chengshi, butan, wusi zhi peiyang* [Christianize the Home Study Group Year-long Program: October 1938 – October 1939: The Family in the Present Crisis – Program 3: The training of children for honesty, truth, loyalty and purity in time of crisis], (Christianize the Home Committee, 1938); *Jiduhua jiating yanjiuhui quannian chengxu: 1938.10 – 1939.10: jiating yu xiandai zhi weiji — chengxu wu: Jiating lingxiu shenghuo* [Christianize the Home Study Group Year-long Program: October 1938 – October 1939: The Family in the Present Crisis – Program 5: Family spiritual life], Christianize the Home Committee, 1938; Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui Jiduhua jiating weiyuanhui, *yijiusiling nian Jiduhua jiating yundongzhou richeng* [1940 Christianize the home movement week schedule] (Shanghai: CLS, 1940).

mid-1930s, there was a significant body of Christian Home literature in Chinese, actively promoting Christian family ideals. The formation of those ideals is the topic of this dissertation; I leave their mutation through war and revolution for a future project.

Even the short overview of the Home Committee's work offered in this chapter reveals that the Home Committee was housed within an organization that was progressive; in the NCC we can see an arm of the missionary movement that was not a moribund vestige of an outdated imperialism, but a vibrant part of a transnational Christian movement, a church. Fueled by its transnational composition and links to an international Christian organization striving for racial and national equality, the NCC was an evolving transnational body trying to be inclusive and to indigenize in response to national and cultural needs and identities in China.

The Home Committee's work is one site where the rubber of these ideals of transnational exchange hit the road, the living laboratory in which norms and beliefs competed and combined. The remainder of this dissertation goes on to examine the views of the experts and evangelists theorizing about this laboratory and attempting to create the ideal conditions there for the conception and growth of the next generation, the generation that would save Christianity and China.

Chapters two and three address the debates that occurred among men about ancestor worship. This male attention within the church, which in many ways was responding to focus on family reform in intellectual circles, brought legitimacy to the topic of the home. As chapter four discusses, Victorian American traditions that placed women at the heart of the home and made them its moral guardians likely influenced the primarily female composition of the NCC's Home Committee, in affirmation of Chinese

women's designation of masters of the *nei*, or interior space, and rising interest in home economics education. Having responsibility and spiritual authority in the arena of the home, and few other arenas in their ecclesiastical organizations, the women of the NCC maximized their purview by taking expansive views of what work was needed and applicable to the home and by employing their power to publish.

Multiple factors led to the creation of the Home Committee, and its designation as a female-majority body, including intellectual male attention to the question of family relationships and American Victorian values that viewed women as morally suited to caring for the home. But in a time of war, it was Guan Cuizhen, a Chinese woman, that was able to continue traveling for her Committee work, visiting areas probably not accessible to her foreign missionary sisters.[104] The fact that she was able to provide some continuity of support while so many church institutions were fleeing to West China shows the strength that her own nationality and race brought to the table, but it does not mean that the associations with Westerners were in some way dying. For good and ill, and no doubt there was some of both,[105] missionaries and Chinese Christians continued to have strong ties until the Chinese state expelled the missionaries. At least in the NCC, they continued moving ahead together in response to transformative visions of world Christian brotherhood.

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[104] Ronald Rees, "National Christian Council of China: Broadcast from Station XMHA, Shanghai, June 12, 1928." SMA, Q579-4-141, 53-4.

[105] Fairbank's volume showcases the mixed bag that was missionary Christianity in China. Fairbank, ed., *The Missionary Enterprise in China and America*.

Chapter Two – Disciples of Evolution: Protestant Approaches to Ancestor Worship

> "If filial piety is not established, then loyalty cannot be built on it; once family autocracy is undone, the monarch's oppressive power will collapse…"[1]
>
> Wu Yu, 1917

> "The time has come for the church to consider this matter more from a constructive point of view. The Church must clearly determine how far its members can go in the matter of commemorating the departed and of paying filial respect to their memory…"[2]
>
> Cheng Jingyi, 1917

In the previous chapter, I outlined the history of the NCC's Home Committee. In this chapter and the next I provide context for the Home Committee's discussions of family spirituality, analyzing debates about ancestor worship and filial piety in a broader Christian community. Members of that community, in seeming opposition to the May Fourth iconoclasts, underwent a transition in which many gradually came to accept Chinese principles and practices like filial piety and ancestor worship as compatible with Christianity, rejecting the notion of a Social Darwinist clash of civilizations. Instead, they perceived evolutionary trajectories for various ideas and practices. Many came to use an approach I refer to as benevolent essentialism to seek to preserve and strengthen both Christianity in China and the Chinese cultural heritage by combining them.

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[1] Wu Yu, "Jiazu Zhidu wei zhuanzhi zhuyi zhi genju lun" [The family system is the basis of despotism], in Zhao Qing and Zheng Cheng, eds., *Wu Yu Ji* [Collected Writings of Wu Yu] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1985), 65. First published in *New Youth* Vol. II, no. 6 (February 1, 1917). My thanks to Joseph W. Esherick for refinements to the translation.

[2] C.Y. Cheng (Cheng Jingyi), "Report of the Special Committee on the Chinese Church." *The Chinese Recorder* vol. 48, no. 6 (June 1917), 368.

Readers may recognize the first quote as a rallying cry of the New Culture or May Fourth Movement. Published in *New Youth* in 1917, the article that this quote was taken from rocketed Wu Yu to fame among radical intellectuals. The well-studied and well-documented movement to which Wu Yu lent his voice has become a major part of the narrative of early twentieth-century Chinese history – in fact, it has become such a dominant narrative that it is sometimes hard to see anything else. When I began studying what Protestant Christians were saying about family in Republican China, I expected to find a story that reinforced the centrality of the May Fourth Movement in China's early twentieth-century intellectual milieu. The highly educated Chinese and Western leaders of the Protestant movement would, I assumed, fall in line with May Fourth cries for social reform. Their choice would be strategic, since Christians would naturally have wanted to engage with the intellectual elite and appeal to students, but aligning with a modernizing, rationalizing force would also be an easy intellectual and spiritual step for early twentieth-century Protestants. Since Social Gospel attitudes characterized many of them, rationality and modernity were often undistinguished from religious conviction.[3]

The second epigraph shows that my initial assumptions were incorrect. This quote comes from a report on the needs of the church in China by Cheng Jingyi, prominent internationally-renowned leader of the Protestant movement in China, and was published in both *The Chinese* Recorder and *The China Mission Yearbook*.[4] As this chapter will

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[3] For an overview of literature establishing this, see Brian Stanley, "Christian Missions and the Enlightenment: A Reevaluation," in Brian Stanley, ed., *Christian Missions and the Enlightenment* (New York: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001).

[4] In this chapter, as elsewhere in this dissertation, I often echo the language of my subjects in referring to "the church" or "the Chinese church" in reference to liberal Chinese Protestantism, rather than specifying a denomination. The reason for this is that the National Christian Council of China, which is the central institution of my study, was an ecumenical organization built to transcend and obviate denominational

show, the report's position on ancestor worship is in line with many other articles written by Chinese and Western Christians in China at the time. At the very moment that the May Fourth intellectuals were pounding at the gates of the old Confucian family home with pitchforks, Chinese and Western Christians were throwing open their doors to welcome in filial piety and seeking to negotiate a truce with ancestor worship. This chapter explains why and how they did this.

The position Cheng Jingyi represented in 1917 was very different from that commonly accepted just a decade earlier. Using as my main source base articles from the YMCA's journal *Qingnian jinbu* and *The Chinese Recorder*, I document a shift in Christian thinking away from a Social Darwinist framework for comparing religions. After first laying out a brief chronological framework to introduce the debate about ancestor worship and some of the events and trends that influenced it, this chapter establishes first the prominence of the evolutionary comparative religion approach. Then it documents a shift in approach that occurred as Christians responded to growing anti-imperialist nationalism: they adopted the project of essentialism with the goal of preserving and embracing the Chinese national character within Christian teachings and practices. In the next chapter I go on to discuss a theological mechanism that allowed the Protestant community to move past rigid rejection of Chinese practices to honor the dead, called fulfilment theory. For many Christians including many leaders and affiliates of the National Christian Council of China, the fulfilment theory, which worked hand-in-hand

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divides. Thus while distinctions remained, the project of the NCC and the outlook of many of its members and affiliates placed value on the notion of a shared Christian identity. "Ancestor Worship," in *The China Mission Year Book: 1917 (Eighth Annual Issue)*, 296, published in Benshu bianweihui, ed., *Zhongguo Jidujiao Nianjian*, vol. 12 (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2013), 312.

with the benevolent essentialism discussed in this chapter, also propelled a paradigm shift away from the imperialist mindset that presupposed the immutable superiority of Western Christianity. The next chapter discusses how those who experienced this paradigm shift formed a new vision of their own identity and their place in the world, a vision of a diverse transnational Christianity.

The intellectual changes revealed in this chapter and the next occurred at different points for different individuals, and their writings reflect that reality. What I picture as a progression of thought was a path that not all traveled in the same way or at the same pace. Some ended their journey of theological stretching on points that were, for others, springboards toward new understanding. Because of this diversity of experience and lack of strict periods, it makes the most sense to take a thematic approach to this material. Such an approach allows me to juxtapose writings produced years apart, and to emphasize continuity in thought as I make sense of trends in writers' thinking that seem to swell and ebb.

A Brief Chronology

While this chapter's analysis is best served by a thematic approach, beginning with a brief chronological overview will provide reference points for the discussion to follow. It will also allow me to make a few assertions about some of the external impetuses to intellectual change during the period in which debates over ancestor worship and filial piety occurred.

1907 – A Sympathetic Conversation Takes Shape

As is the case with all intellectual history, this chapter jumps into a conversation already underway. In 1907 the third all-China missionary conference convened in Shanghai. At this conference, the Committee on Ancestral Worship read a report that represents an important step in the missionary community's progress toward sympathetic and analytical approaches to perceived Chinese beliefs about ancestors. This report is the foundation upon which much of the following conversation was based. The ideas we find expressed in 1907 are an outgrowth of decades of previous conversation on the matter of ancestor worship. Many ideas expressed in the 1907 report were central to the Edinburgh 1910 conference and helped shape the ecumenical movement for decades to follow.[5]

Prior to 1907, the question about ancestor worship seems to have been "is it worship?" An affirmative answer, it was supposed, would end any discussion on possible tolerance of the practice, because it would have indicated that ancestor worship was a violation of the first of the Old Testament's Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me."[6] At the first national conference of missionaries in China in 1877, Reverend M. T. Yates established the consensus, decrying the practice of ancestor worship on the basis that it unquestionably entailed religious worship.[7] In spite of a few calls for sympathy toward the Chinese, there was reportedly no real debate on the matter, and his opinion remained the final word (as is evinced by the tone and content of

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[5] E.g. the idea that the solution to the problem of ancestor worship "is in the hands of the Chinese." "Ancestral Worship," *China Centenary Missionary Conference Records* (New York: American Tract Society), 1907, 609-10.

[6] King James Version, Exodus 20:3.

[7] M.T. Yates, "Ancestral Worship and Fung-Shuy," *Chinese Recorder* 1.2 (June 1868), 23. This article was printed in two parts; henceforth the June portion will be referenced as Part I.

publications on ancestor worship that followed his article's printing in the *Chinese Recorder*).

In 1890, at the next national missionary conference, Reverend W.A.P. Martin read a paper called "The Worship of Ancestors—a Plea for Toleration." Martin was an extremely prominent missionary. He had been in China forty years at this point, and was distinguished by having taken supporting roles to the anti-Qing Taiping rebellion and having held administrative positions in Chinese education. He served as a bridge between cultures, publishing works that interpreted Western faith and culture to the Chinese and vice versa.[8] Some sympathy with Martin's interpretation was voiced in the discussion that followed, but the discussion was shut down by the renowned and respected evangelical giant of the China Inland Mission, Hudson Taylor. Taylor stood and said simply, "I trust that all those who wish to raise an indignant protest against the conclusion of Dr. Martin's paper will signify it by rising," and nearly the whole audience stood with him.[9] It was an intimidating move, for those who took up Taylor's conservative stance signified it with physical action which put them above those who remained sitting – literally able to look down on them. Those who stayed in their chairs, likely experiencing restricted line of sight because of the standers, would be unable to assess how many allies were also still seated. One can imagine it was a demoralizing moment for those seeking a new approach to the question of ancestor worship. Given this dramatic and polarizing

[8] Ralph Covell, *W.A.P. Martin: Pioneer of Progress in China* (Washington, D.C.: Christian College Consortium, 1978), 1-2.
[9] James Thayer Addison, "Chinese Ancestor Worship and Protestant Christianity," *The Journal of Religion* 5.2 (March 1925), 140-41.

incident, there is little wonder that the committee formed after that conference to research Ancestral Worship phrased its 1907 report in the most careful and conciliatory language.

That the head of the committee on Ancestral Worship, James Jackson, felt vulnerable presenting his report to the next all-China missionary conference in 1907 can be seen in his approach to his subject. His introductory paragraph points out that "At the last General Conference our subject… was the one over which the Conference came nearest to losing its temper!" Jackson sought to establish a certain tone for the conversation he knew would follow, urging calm, judiciousness, and sympathy. He stated that his paper's method was "eirenical," seeking to build common ground through logic. "It seeks to unite the Conference in endeavoring to find some relief for the present distress, in removing all unnecessary stumbling-blocks, while at the same time securing the purity of the Church."

Jackson and his committee clearly hoped to effect a warming of the Christian community toward Chinese practices and beliefs. It is likely that the Boxer Uprising, which provided a revelation of Chinese animosity against foreigners and Christians in particular, provided motivation for Christians like Jackson to seek a more conciliatory stance toward Chinese culture; as the previous chapter of this dissertation points out, expressions of Chinese animosity against Christians provided numerous opportunities for Christians to self-assess. To assuage the worries of the nervous conservatives among his readers, though, Jackson laid out his points very carefully. The stated goal of his committee's study was evangelical; ancestral worship was a known barrier to conversion, and he wished to "lessen the friction" in particular between missions and literati or elite classes of Chinese. But Jackson was careful to emphasize the limitations to acceptable

compromise, saying that the lessening of friction must be done “without compromising any vital truth of Christianity, or without being disloyal to the great Head of the Church.” This statement reflects one of Jackson’s main goals for the report: to reassure those stridently offended by ancestor worship in the missionary community that no unacceptable line would be crossed. His second task was to delineate convincingly precisely which aspects of ancestor worship were actually incompatible with Christianity, and which could be adopted or adapted to Christian use. Such adoption and adaptation would be a significant step past the whole-sale rejection that was the Christian norm at that point.

In order to effect a peaceful unification of the missionary community, Jackson clarified the point of previous contention: whether or not ancestral rites constituted worship. This had been a major point of the Rites Controversy of the seventeenth and eighteenth century and continued to be seen as meriting discussion throughout the early half of the twentieth-century. Jackson harked back to the early, or “primitive” worship of ancestors, and found in it no deification of the ancestors. Yet contemporary Chinese practices did seem religious, including as they often did prayers to ancestors for blessings or for help avoiding calamities. Like Yates and others, Jackson described the historical transition to this attitude of worship as a deterioration that occurred over time.

Jackson added nuance to the conversation by taking an etymological approach to the question. He pointed out that even in English, the word “worship” can hold different meanings in different contexts. In Chinese, known as a language with shifting shades of meaning, Jackson argued that that must be all the more true. He sought to soothe those who feared the violation of the first and second of the Ten Commandments (the second

states "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image… Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them").[10] To that end, Jackson suggested the use of the English word "reverence" instead of "worship" in discussions of Chinese practices. "This may not be quite convenient," he allowed, "but let us at least understand each other. No one in this Conference would defend the practice of offering the same worship which is due and paid to the Supreme to any inferior be he man or demigod. We are all agreed on that." Jackson was carefully establishing the groundwork of a conversation that could be constructive rather than reactionary or fear-based.[11] In discussions of Jackson's committee's report, Reverend J.C. Gibson, the Chairman of the Conference, used similarly direct language in support of the idea that Chinese Christians be encouraged to follow their own consciences about participation in rites. "But let us not imagine for a moment that we are in any way divided on the question of ancestor worship or on the use of memorial services." Issues of semantics were creating the illusion of differences of doctrine that did not exist in reality;[12] assuaging the fears of some members of the community meant affirming its united commitment to monotheism and implicitly to the Ten Commandments.

After Jackson's 1907 report and the conversation at the national meeting following its delivery, the conversation about ancestor worship changed. Jackson's report may have had a real part in this shifting trend, or it may simply have been an expression of changes already in motion. One account published in 1925 pointed out that already

[10] King James Version, Exodus 20:4-5.
[11] James Jackson, "Ancestral Worship," *China Centenary Missionary Conference Records* (New York: American Tract Society, 1907), 215-18.
[12] "Ancestral Worship," 618-20.

"[b]y [1907] there was far more general recognition of the problems created by ancestor-worship and a far more open-minded approach to it. Liberal views were freely expressed which would have been regarded at the earlier gathering as due to the direct intervention of Satan." Still, even the writer of that account acknowledges the important work done by Jackson and his committee.[13] Articles published in the *Chinese Recorder* for the following few years show that voicing sympathy with the Chinese and respect for their beliefs was now considered the appropriate starting point for discussions of ancestor worship, whether one went on to express a desire for drastically greater flexibility in Christian responses to it or to affirm the inherent superiority of Western teachings about ancestors.[14] Chinese writers in this conversation sometimes acted as expert interpreters of Chinese culture and sometimes pushed for appreciation of the good in ancestor worship.[15] The general trend was toward sympathy toward the Chinese and willingness to see good in non-Christian religious practices.[16]

1916-1917: Responses to National and International Affairs

In 1917 we see a swell in articles on ancestor worship, likely resulting from multiple factors. In 1916, a fresh round of debates arose about making Confucianism the

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[13] Addison, "Chinese Ancestor-worship and Protestant Christianity," 142.
[14] E.g., W.S. Packenham-Walsh, "Memorials to the Dead and their Relation to Christian Practice." *Chinese Recorder*, 41.4 (April 1910), 264-265; W.A. Cornaby, "Christian Suggestions in Chinese Superstitions." *Chinese Recorder* 41.4 (April 1910), 257-64.
[15] Wei, Francis C.M., "Religious Beliefs of the Ancient Chinese and Their Influence on the National Character of the Chinese People." *Chinese Recorder* 42.6 (June 1911), 319-328, and 42.7 (July 1911), 403-415; Tsu, Y. Y. (Zhu Youyu), "The Chinese Idea of Worship (Zhongguo jisi zhi yiyi)." *Chinese Recorder* 45.10 (Oct. 1914), 615-25.
[16] The sense that a more liberal attitude could be observed among missionaries dating roughly from the 1907 conference was expressed in 1925 by Addison, "Chinese Ancestor Worship and Protestant Christianity," 144-5.

state religion of China.[17] These may have prompted calls for the rejection of Confucianism from Wu Yu and others in 1917. Of additional concern to Christian writers was news that the Japanese government was calling Shinto rites civic, not religious, in nature, and on that basis, expected Christians to participate. The Japanese government had been making this claim since the late nineteenth century, but in 1911 the Japanese government caused new consternation among Christian educators there by unofficially instructing teachers to bring pupils to state shrines and perform rites there. [18] *The Chinese Recorder* seems to have had its attention drawn to this situation for some reason in 1917, for in May and July of that year, two editorials and one article discussed Japanese Shinto rites in tones of foreboding. These three pieces all argued that though the Japanese government claimed that the rites were not religious, they certainly were. These concerns about the religious rights of Christians under the Japanese state led some writers to fall back on their tradition's earliest articulation: anti-Catholic Protestantism. Deep memory of their people's felt need to cut off the corrupting pattern of syncretism came to the surface quickly when the specter of the large state loomed. The year after the second attempt to make Confucianism the state religion of China, many Christians in China imagining the Japanese pressure on Christians felt vulnerable and apprehensive about the possible future conflicts of conscience, likely because of the political instability in China in a time when the Republican government was failing and warlords competed for control

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[17] Vincent Goossaert, "Republican Church Engineering: The National Religious Associations in 1912 China," in Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, ed., *Chinese Religiosities: Afflictions of Modernity and State Formation* (Berkeley, UC Press: 2008), 220.

[18] Richardson, William J. *Christianity in Taiwan Under Japanese Rule, 1895-1945* (PhD dissertation, St. John's University, 1972), 168-9, 172.

of Chinese territory. Authors warned against compromise on ancestor worship in China. Revealing their ignorance of the last ten years' discussion, two of the three 1917 *Chinese Recorder* pieces expressed shock at the idea that anyone was already preaching positive things about ancestor rites.[19] Concerned writers asserted that Catholicism could act as a cautionary tale to those willing to consider syncretism with Chinese practices; one 1917 editorial warned ominously of the "results known to all" of the Catholic church's compromise with the Roman Empire, which allowed worship of saints and martyrs to substitute for the disavowed Roman deities.[20]

Retrenching based on concerns about Japanese Shinto rites coincided with an upswing in discussion about family reform in the intellectual community; we remember that Wu Yu's article was published in the same year, 1917, in *New Youth*. That year, the Chinese YMCA consolidated two existing publications into a new journal, called *Qingnian jinbu* (Association Progress).[21] This journal had a different focus and readership from *The Chinese Recorder*, as is evident in the type of articles that were written about ancestor worship. *Qingnian jinbu* seems to have been more attuned to the intellectual discussions on family that were building outside the Christian community during this time period. The journal published numerous articles presenting a new vision

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[19] "Editorial: 'The Chinese Church,'" *Chinese Recorder* vol. 48, no. 5 (May 1917), 78-9; "Editorial: 'Ancestor Worship,'" *Chinese Recorder* vol. 48, no. 7 (July 1917), 413-14; Anonymous, "Ancestor Worship in Japan," *Chinese Recorder* vol. 48, no 7 (July 1917), 452-5.
[20] "Editorial: 'The Chinese Church,'" 78-9.
[21] Fuk-Tsang Ying, "Fan Zimei: Between Tradition and Modernity," in Carol Lee Hamrin, ed., with Stacy Bieler, *Salt and Light, Volume 1: Lives of Faith That Shaped Modern China* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 71.

for the family's place in society,[22] the harm done by the patriarchal family structure,[23] and various Western thinkers' theories on family reform.[24] Some articles from *Qingnian jinbu* directly address issues of filial piety and ancestor worship, and these will be discussed in this chapter. Many, however, seem to offer a replacement norm of modern nuclear families, without seriously engaging the ideals and norms of the extended family or traditional Chinese beliefs.[25] While these articles are not discussed in depth here, it is important to note that they existed, because they show that many Christians agreed with New Culture and May Fourth statements about the need for family reform, family's impact on society, and the negative impact of the *da jiating*, or extended family system. And of course, these ideas were in circulation among the Christian community, in particular the educated or student elements of it.

Amongst all these voices for radical reform and knee-jerk conservatism, Cheng Jingyi's 1917 article is remarkable in its moderation. Cheng's comments on ancestor worship are similar to those made in previous years by the sympathetic. He took a very measured approach, presenting the results of a small survey and a set of suggestions based on what churches were already doing to show common cause with Chinese members who wanted to honor their dead. Cheng wrote as a representative of the China

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[22] Chen Kanmou. "Jiating zai shehui zhong zhi diwei he xingzhi" [The nature and status of the family in society]. *Qingnian Jinbu* 38 (Dec. 1920), 29-32.
[23] Qian Baohe. "Xin sichao yu jiu lunli" [New tides of thought and old ethics]. *Qingnian jinbu* 32 (April 1920), 3-8.
[24] Ying Yuandao, "Jindai jiating yanjiu de paibie (zhong)" [Different camps in the modern study of the family (part 2 of 3)]. *Qingnian jinbu* 49 (Jan. 1922), 31-35; Ren Fu, "Jiating yu shehui" [Family and society]. *Qingnian jinbu* 55 (July 1922), 27-32.
[25] Shidu'er, "Jidujiao de jiating" [Christian families], tr. Y.D. *Qingnian jinbu* 38 (Dec. 1920), 11-15; Feng Shuhua, "Jiating lunli guan" [Views on family ethics]. *Qingnian jinbu* 40 (Feb. 1921), 15-20; Beth. B. Gilchrist, "Jiating shi shenme" [What family is], tr. Yuandao. *Qingnian Jinbu* 41 (March 1921), 100-103.

Continuation Committee, which stood for the ecumenical goals that had been expressed at the 1910 Edinburgh conference. His was an articulate, authoritative voice calling for sympathy and flexibility in a year when radically progressive and radically conservative voices were the norm.[26]

At this point we return to the two quotes with which I began this chapter. Should we read Wu Yu's words next to Cheng's and write off the latter as a laughable instance of the Christian church being out of touch with current intellectual trends? Are the *Qingnian jinbu* authors who wrote in support of family reform the Christian contingent that was "with the times"? No; chalking up the contrast between these quotes to the backwardness of the church would be a failure to correctly understand certain historical realities.

According to historian Vera Schwarcz, by 1919, reformers had been rejecting the notion that filial piety ought to rule human relations for decades.[27] Sociologist Judith Stacey notes that writings repudiating filial piety appeared as early as the late part of the Qing Empress Dowager Cixi's reign. Indeed, reforms begun during Cixi's reign, particularly the abolition of the imperial examination system in 1905, signaled a decentering of Chinese society, a move away from the Confucian family in society. With the end of the old education system that had prepared hopeful bureaucrats by indoctrination in Confucian ethics, filial piety was no longer "the prescribed route to state service and social mobility" that it had been for centuries. From that point on, Stacey

[26] Cheng, "Report of the Special Committee on the Chinese Church," 364-9.
[27] Schwarcz, *The Chinese Enlightenment*, 107.

claims, China was at the mercy of an onslaught of Western educational philosophies and practices.[28]

While some scholars, like Stacey, make it sound as though a Westernizing wave overtook China, the reality is efforts at reform did not immediately trickle down into widespread adoption of a nuclear family model. Analyzing sociological survey data from the 1920s, historian Susan Glosser finds that while many young people had access to a new set of expectations for marriage and family life, they were in many ways still restrained from embracing an independent nuclear family model by both their own desires and the demands of the older generation. Among those surveyed, the majority of whom were either students or held white-collar positions, less than half expressed even a desire for full independence from the multigenerational Confucian family. In many ways, those surveyed "affirmed the values of the traditional patriarchal family." And they were a minority already, as educated urbanites.

Glosser's research also shows that even when young elite intellectuals violently disapproved, they could not change the expectations of the older generation overnight. Many were expected to marry, at a young age, a spouse selected by their parents, and young people were expected to live their lives preparing to support their parents in their old age.[29] In 1919, the great literary figure and critic of Chinese tradition Lu Xun (1881-1936) expressed the tension between ideals and actualization that many felt in China during the early twentieth century. In an article entitled "What is expected of us as parents," he wrote of his commitment to his children's freedom of marriage, in spite of

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[28] Judith Stacey, *Patriarchy and Socialist Revolution in China* (Berkeley: UC Press, 1983), 69-70.
[29] Glosser, *Chinese Visions of Family and State*, 60-61, 63, 77.

his own inability to escape his sense of responsibility to his parents and his (arranged) marriage: "Burdened as a man may be with the weight of tradition, he may yet prop open the gate of darkness with his shoulder to let the children pass through to the wide-open spaces to lead happy lives..."[30] The vision Lu Xun had of at least allowing his children the freedom to live as they wanted was based on his perception that the loving familial relationships that existed in the West were based not on obligation, but on emancipation.[31] Lu Xun's article and the survey data Glosser's work discusses indicate that the educated Chinese youths personally accepted some of the Western notions of companionate marriage and financially independent nuclear families in far greater numbers than they were able to realize those ideals in their own lives.

Christians took an increasingly accepting stance toward ancestor worship and filial piety in the first decades of the twentieth century not because they were out of touch with current trends, but because current trends were much more complex than the historical narratives that privilege the May Fourth Movement often lead us to believe. On this basis the Protestants whose writings we are studying found it strategically sound to continue to seek common ground with those who valued their ancestral rites. This was stated most bluntly in an article by Fan Zimei in an article called "My Interpretation of Chinese Ancestor Veneration." Fan was a Confucian scholar who converted to Christianity in 1902 when already middle-aged. The chief editor for the YMCA's magazine *Qingnian Jinbu* (Association Progress), Fan had, in 1924, announced the

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[30] Quoted in *Ibid.*, 78. Lu Xun's article is: "What is Required of Us as Fathers Today," in *Lu Xun, Selected Works*, tr. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1980).
[31] Lu Xun, "What is Required of Us," 66.

formation of a new YMCA society for the study of Chinese culture as part of a shift toward cultural synthesis rather than importation.[32] In “My Interpretation of Chinese Ancestor Veneration,” Fan argued that ancestor worship cannot be discarded altogether, because the common people would object too strongly. Fan, like many others, argued that ancestor worship had been corrupted since the time of Confucius from its original meaning, a theme to which I will return shortly.[33] Here, the important point is to note that according to Fan Zimei and many others, who stood in a line of tradition reaching back to the seventeenth-century Jesuits, Christianity’s rejection of ancestor worship was a major barrier to Chinese conversion. Acceptance of and responsiveness to the needs and desires of common people mattered to many Christians in China, because reducing the cultural barriers could increase conversions.

Just the same, the slow adjustment to new practices that frustrated Lu Xun was at play here too; while Cheng and others advocated more sympathy toward Chinese beliefs and practices, the measures that had been recommended to meet the memorializing needs of the Chinese members (which will be discussed in more detail in chapter four) seem to have been, by 1917 at least, far from universally followed.[34] Even where such measures were employed, some considered them to still be needlessly, insultingly restrictive.[35]

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[32] Fuk-Tsang Ying, “Fan Zimei: Between Tradition and Modernity,” 64-47. Regarding Fan’s new society, see Xing Jun, *Baptized in the Fire of Revolution,* 70.
[33] Fan Zimei [Bihui, pseud]. “Zhongguo jisi zuzong de wojian” [My views on Chinese ancestor worship]. *Qingnian jinbu* 109 (Jan. 1928), 19. [Fan] Bihui is not exactly a pseudonym; it is one of Fan Zimei’s alternate names; see Fuk-Tsang Ying, “Fan Zimei: Between Tradition and Modernity,” 65.
[34] Cheng, “Report of the Special Committee on the Chinese Church,” 366-7.
[35] Nieh, C.C., [Untitled], 1924?, 7. SMA, Q579-4-144.

The Mid-1920s Anti-Christian Campaign and Beyond

In the early 1920s, in line with the anti-imperialist nationalism that grew in force after May 4, 1919, anti-Christian sentiment grew into a full-fledged movement in China. The impact of this movement on missionaries and the Protestant Movement generally has been discussed in Chapter One of this dissertation. Here, suffice it to say that during the mid-1920s, Chinese Christian writers pushed back more explicitly against Western Christian triumphalism, the idea that Western Christianity was the ideal Christianity, the religious pinnacle. These criticisms include critiques of Western family life and some reassertions of the value of the family practices and norms known as Confucian. During this period we also see increasingly self-aware introspection from Western missionaries, many of whom, slow though they may have been about it, heard and responded to Chinese ire against cultural imperialism. A desire to see and respect Chinese national identity appears in the efforts I refer to as "benevolent essentialism."

In 1929 and 1930, the Protestant movement, led by the National Christian Council of China, established a Five Year Movement to recover from the devastations of the previous few years. Armed in part with resolutions to be more responsive, they moved ahead with a sense of regained confidence. Questioning and criticizing the imperialist project brought many Christians to the new vision represented in the next chapter, the vision of a World Christianity characterized not by hierarchies among peoples but by a truly equal meeting of fellow travelers along the path toward as yet unrealized Christianity.

The Evolution of Comparative Religion

Many of the writers who participated in this debate claimed to use the methods of comparative religion. At least in the early part of the twentieth century, this meant that their historical framework was derived from the theory of evolution. Historian of comparative religion Eric J. Sharpe describes the late nineteenth-century West as responding to Darwin's work, as mediated by Spencer, by becoming "obsessively historical," bent on understanding all of human development in its stages from primitivism to the most developed stage, embodied by the West. This rubric was applied to the study of religion, "with an energy and intensity second to none;" scholars studied world religions in order to rank and compare them with each other and with Christianity. According to Sharpe, the evolutionary framework had some positive effects: comparative religion justified the study of peoples who previously had been seen as too primitive to even be considered fully human. Under an evolutionary rubric, their religions were worth studying to shed light on early phases of human development. While this approach raised the valuation of some peoples and cultures in Western eyes, the fact that it constituted a teleology in which Western Christianity was the developmental endpoint against which others were assessed was still a very negating approach to other religions and cultures.

The evolutionary framework for comparative religion is certainly present in the early writings examined in this chapter, but it was left behind by many over the next two decades. This chapter and the next reveal and explain that shift, which Sharpe also noted,[36] by explaining the mechanisms by which Christians in China made the transition

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[36] Eric J. Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History* (London: Gerald Duckworth and Company, 1975), xii, 25, 34, 48-9. Sharpe notes that the shift occurred between 1907 and the time of his writing, nearly seventy

past an evolutionary approach to religion. Debates between Christians in China over ancestor worship are a site of contestation in which a Social Darwinist historical framework was overcome by a new vision of Christianity's purpose and developmental endpoint.

In the ancestor worship debate, some writers brought up evolution in only a passing way, perhaps to signal the modern-mindedness of the writer. For example, Ying Yuandao, an author who wrote and translated numerous articles about family issues for the YMCA journal *Qingnian jinbu*, referred to Jesus as the number one person in the world able to push ahead the evolution of society by his own strength.[37] Others just implied an evolutionary approach by referring to a ranking of civilizations or religions linked with the notion of progression. Such is the case in the writings of Ernest Faber, a well-known scholar of comparative religion who wrote in the nineteenth century. While Faber's assessment of the Chinese text the Canon of Filial Piety did not explicitly refer to a schemata of chronological development, as many later writers did, he employed a science-inspired mechanism of categorizing and ranking of religious beliefs. Faber considered the deification of dead fathers to be a pitiful apex of a lesser type of religion, comparing it to his Christian belief system in which deification of a man was seen as denying or blind to the loftiness of God. In drawing the comparison between thus-construed Christian and Chinese beliefs, Faber drew a distinction in type: "Here we have

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years later. This dissertation pins the time and process of that change down, at least for those whose work was published in China. See also Eric J. Sharpe, *Not to Destroy But to Fulfil: The Contribution of J.N. Farquhar to Protestant Missionary Thought in India before 1914* (Sweden: Almqvist & Wiksells Boktryckeri AB, 1965), 39.

[37] Ying Yuandao, "Jidujiao yu jiating wenti" [Christianity and family problems]. *Qingnian jinbu* 61 (March 1923), 8.

arrived at the great gulf between natural religion and revelation."[38] Faber assumes that the reader buys into a ranking system in which a religion based entirely upon the direct revelation of truth by God is superior to one in which believers build their understanding of deity based on what they perceive in the world around them ("natural religion"). Both the existence of such categories and the presumed ranking of one as unquestionably superior to another show the rationalized hierarchy within which Faber operated. Furthermore, in envisioning an apex of religion, Faber signals that he sees religions, if not literally having developed along the same trajectory, as possible to map on a developmental hierarchy.

Others explicitly and consciously adopted an evolutionary framework for their theological and ecclesiological writings. The evolutionary framework at work in the thought of some Christian writers was based on the idea that understanding other religions better would highlight their differences from Christianity and reinforce Christianity's superiority. This teleology is similar to the assumptions of Western superiority that undergirded the New Culture Movement. In it, as in the Christian conversation about ancestor worship, there were Chinese thinkers who accepted the developmental model of history and saw the West as embodying the endpoint of that development.

One Chinese Christian who embraced the comparative religion framework described above was Wei Zhuomin, or Francis C.M. Wei. In 1911, Wei published a two-part article entitled "Religious Beliefs of the Ancient Chinese and Their Influence on the

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[38] Faber, Ernest. "A Critique of the Chinese Notions and Practice of Filial Piety," *The Chinese Recorder and Missionary Journal* IX.6 (Nov.-Dec. 1878), 404-5.

National Character of the Chinese People." Wei was a recent graduate of Boone College, an American Episcopal Institution in Wuchang. He would go on to get a Master's of Arts from Boone, another from Harvard, and a PhD from the University of London. Wei later served as President of Huazhong University (the new name given to Boone after an expansion project) and preached in a number of seminaries and cathedrals, including Yale Divinity School, Westminster Abbey, and St. Paul's. He became known as a proponent of World Christianity.[39] Some of Wei's democratizing and equalizing ideas from later writings will be examined in the next chapter, but at this early point in his career Wei was still very much grounded in the frameworks of evolution-based comparative religion. The two-part article he published in 1911 is likely the senior thesis he wrote for his bachelor's degree at Boone.

Wei had clearly been steeped in the study of comparative religion at Boone, for he proclaimed the field's importance at the beginning of his article, and then proceeded to exhibit that his thinking was in line with the field's evolutionary bent. He executed his study with great confidence, criticizing and correcting previous interpretations offered by such giants of sinology and comparative religion as James Legge and Ernest Faber. While taking up a position as a native expert, Wei bought into the discipline of examining the development of and ranking religions. In a paragraph that claims to "penetrate deeper into the feelings of the ancient Chinese in order to reach the true explanation of their worship of natural objects," Wei assessed the historical civilization in China based on the relative advancement of their theology. For instance, he said of the Chinese of a certain era that

[39] Peter Tze-Ming Ng, "Wei Zhuomin: Bridging National Culture and World Values," in Hamrin, ed., *Salt and Light*, 134-5, 143.

"their imagination was not strong enough to carry them one step further in order to realize this superior power [--the power of God that was behind natural phenomena--] in a clear-cut conception."[40] Wei describes the Chinese as having later developed a "noble and lofty conception of the Lord of the universe." His positive estimation of that later form of deity is based on a Christian idea of God. "The conception is not perfect, but in many ways defective. But as a whole it is creditable to the ancient Chinese as a primitive people and comparable in some respects with the highest conception of the Supreme Being in the religious systems of the world."[41] While he may have proclaimed the strengths of the Chinese tradition, Wei worked within the framework set by the West.

The framework of evolutionary forward progress was sometimes used in conjunction with a discourse on degeneration that likely derived from Christian notions of Adam and Eve's fall from paradise, falls from grace, and the dispensationalist idea of apostasy, a correctable departure from obedience to and correct knowledge of truth. We see this in the writings of Faber, of Reverend M.T. Yates, who decried ancestor worship at the 1877 missionary meeting, and of others. Yates deployed such a notion to describe the historical trajectory of Confucianism, saying that the Empire-building principles embraced by Confucius had "degenerated into what I regard as the principle religion of the Chinese."[42] An unnamed Chinese writer whose article was published in translation in 1877 likewise referred to a degeneration, this one as having occurred from the time of

[40] Francis C.M. Wei, "Religious Beliefs of the Ancient Chinese and Their Influence on the National Character of the Chinese People." *Chinese Recorder* vol. 42, no. 6 (June 1911), 319, 321, 323-4. This is the first of a two-part article; hereafter it will be referenced as Francis Wei, "Religious Beliefs" Part I.
[41] Wei, Francis C.M. "Religious Beliefs of the Ancient Chinese and Their Influence on the National Character of the Chinese People." *Chinese Recorder* vol. 42, no. 7 (July 1911), 403-4. This is the second part of a two-part study, hereafter cited as Wei, "Religious Beliefs" Part II.
[42] Yates, "Ancestral Worship and Fung-Shuy" Part I, 23.

Adam to the mythical forbears of Chinese civilization, Yao and Shun, and from thence to the present time. He argues, "The later we come down, the further have men departed from God."[43] This language of religious devolution fit Christian timelines that envisioned a sacred primordial past in which God and man were not separated as in the present day. This idea, of course, does not map well onto the historical narrative of evolution employed by scholars of comparative religion. In the next chapter we will see how a theology of fulfillment helped to reconcile the two conflicting historical models.

In the matter of ancestor worship, the Confucian past did map conveniently onto a historical model of degeneration, for a study of the classics convinced many Christians that the original meaning of ancestor veneration was not worship (which most Christian writers defined as presuming supernatural power of and asking for aid from the ancestors), but memorial honoring of ancestors.[44] The "original" practice of ancestor worship, which was inferred from reading the Classics to have been Confucius's own practice, thus gave Christians an idealized past to hark back to. Writers sometimes condemned Buddhism and Taoism as the corrupting forces that pulled ancestor veneration into superstition.[45] Highly educated missionaries appreciated that educated Chinese tended to view and practice ancestor worship in a rational, non-worshipful way, for many of them followed the classics in understanding proper ancestral rites as expressions of filial devotion rather than opportunities to importune the departed for

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[43] Anonymous, "On Sacrificial Offerings." *Chinese Recorder* vol. 8 no. 6 (Nov-Dec. 1877), 494.
[44] Bihui (Fan Zimei), "Zhongguo jisi zuzong de wojian," 18; Wei, "Religious Beliefs" Part II, 412;
[45] Jackson, "Ancestral Worship," 219; Wei believed that Taoism and Buddhism's "superstitions" had filled the demands of religion after the Confucian concept of *shangdi* faded from the popular imaginary; see "Religious Beliefs" Part II, 405.

assistance.[46] The latter is the element of religiosity Christians perceived in the ancestor worship of their less-educated contemporaries, which was often decried as "superstitious."[47]

In addition to the addition of superstitious elements, writers noted another form of degeneration: the loss of the moral core of filial piety. Faber stated in 1878 that the Chinese people's "very worship of ancestors is, at the present day, nearly altogether void of the moral qualities required in [the Canon of filial piety]," a point also made by Fan Zimei.[48] One missionary, T.W. Douglas James, wrote of a similar decrease in the quality of teachings about ancestor worship in non-Christian schools. In his view, the degeneration of the moral core had occurred because of the state's efforts to strip away superstitious beliefs; he felt the state had thrown out the baby with the bathwater.[49] Later in this chapter, we will discuss others who saw ancestor worship (and filial piety) as spiritual allies with Christianity against the forces of secularism.

Adherents of rationality, Faber and Yates both employed arguments that bear striking resemblance to those used by May Fourth iconoclasts four and five decades later.

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[46] Jackson, "Ancestral Worship," 224; E.R. Hughes, "The Religious Experiment of Hsiao (Filial Piety): An Enquiry into its Earlier History and an Estimate of its Religious Significance." *Zhenli yu shengming* [Truth and life] 4.12-13 (Feb. 1930), 9; the greater absence of superstition in the rites of the literati families is suggested in E.E. Jones, "The Attitude of the Chinese Church toward Non-Christian Festivals," *Chinese Recorder* vol. 47 (Mar. 1916), 163.

[47] The NCC's Home Committee was vague on which elements were superstitious, but stated the need to guard against such abuses of the principles of filial piety. "Zhengqiu quanguo xintu duiyu jingzu wenti jianyi'an de yijian" [Requesting the opinions of believers all over the nation on the ancestor worship resolution]. (Shanghai: Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui Jiduhua jiating weiyuanhui [National Christian Council Christianize the Home Committee], 1931), 2. SMA, U123-0-160-67; James Thayer Addison, "The Meaning of Chinese Ancestor Worship." *The Chinese Recorder* 55.9 (Sept. 1924), 593-4.

[48] Faber, "Notions and Practice of Filial Piety" Part II, 406; Fan Zimei, "Zhongguo jisi zuzong de wojian," 16.

[49] T. W. Douglas James, "The Christian Approach to Ancestor Worship." *Chinese Recorder* 56 (Nov. 1925), 730.

On principles of social justice, Yates decried the evils of early betrothal and polygamy as outgrowths of the culture created by ancestor worship. He discussed the great financial expenditure undertaken in service of ancestral rites and considered ways in which those funds could have better served the poor. But most strikingly in line with the May Fourth iconoclastic lines are Yates' and Faber's arguments about ancestor worship's impact on the spirit of innovation in China. As Yates put it, "the living are the slaves of the dead. Yea, the generation of to-day is chained to the generations of the past. Their thoughts do not trend forward, but backwards." Yates even stated among the losses inflicted by ancestral worship "the loss of an industrial point of view," based on the labor spent manufacturing the implements necessary for ancestor worship. Faber pointed out specifically that female labor was much wasted in this endeavor. Ten years later, Faber described Chinese thought as lacking boldness. "Great filial piety, taken in this sense, has made great children of the Chinese. All their productions are on that account more or less puerile."[50] In thus describing the Chinese thus as stuck in a childlike state, Faber invoked the idea of arrested development; his intellectual framework was evolution-based.

An inherent conflict between a developmental, Social Darwinist approach and a narrative of religious degeneration comes to the fore in Jackson's 1907 report. Jackson built his report on a comparative religion approach, which he seems to have assumed would provide a common point of reference. He wrote of his comparative religion focus with a tone of confidence, as if sure this would be a selling point of his paper for the skeptical reader. In keeping with the current trend toward evolutionary thinking, Jackson

[50] Yates, "Ancestral Worship and Fung-Shuy" Part II, 38; Faber, "Notions and Practice of Filial Piety" Part II, 407.

assumed universal stages of development for civilization, and attempted to locate China along them. He wrote, for example, "I think the historical and comparative investigation of Ancestral Worship must convince us that it belongs to a low type of religion, at any rate to a very imperfect stage of development. It may be that it even marks deterioration from a former more advanced type." Jackson asserted that China's civilizational "arrested development" was a result of the nation's relative isolation for so long from "the world at large." While this language seems strikingly and stridently Euro- or Western-centric, we must remember that Jackson saw his stance as shockingly sympathetic.

In fact, Jackson invoked evolutionary principles in a way that was actually subversive to the established Western assessments of ancestor worship. In the historical longevity of the ancestor rites, he found evidence of the practice's inherent strengths and contributions to Chinese society. Jackson may have timidly expressed this view, but the comparative religion framework that he so confidently invoked justified it; evolution is not only the process by which harmful traits are eliminated, but it is also the process whereby positive traits are preserved – or rather, by which positive traits preserve the species in question.

Jackson argues that ancestor worship preserved the clan-based structure of Chinese society, and indeed was intended to do so. He cited a paper written for him by the Chinese secretary to a Viceroy. This secretary supported the idea that the ancestral sacrifices and service in ancestral temples are key to clan unity. After discussing clan loyalty in an academic, sociological, light, Jackson seems suddenly to shift gears, quoting the Bible: "Regarding this preserving of the integrity of the family and clan life as one of the chief motives to Ancestral Worship, we must admit that it has served its purpose in a

very marked degree. The persistence of the Chinese race and civilization through so many ages is doubtless owing chiefly to the cult of Ancestors. 'Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land.'" Following the passage quoted here, Jackson proceeds immediately to a new sub-section of the paper and begins on a new topic. His abrupt invocation of the fifth of the biblical Ten Commandments here is sudden and unexplained, so the reader is left to interpret for herself what Jackson is saying.

In relating the fifth Commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land," to ancestor worship and the clan system, Jackson establishes a logical argument. The premises of his argument are first, the Chinese have been practicing ancestor veneration for thousands of years; and second, the clan system has endured for thousands of years as the central structure of Chinese society. His statement of the relationship between those two facts is given in the voice of God himself, from the Ten Commandments. The logical expression of Jackson's understanding of the commandment is: "if and only if you honor your father and mother, then your days will be long in the land." Completing the syllogism, the reader is left to conclude that, since the Chinese clan structure has enjoyed such longevity, therefore the Chinese must (through ancestral veneration) be obedient to the fifth commandment. Jackson does not elucidate, or unpack this argument; that is left for the reader to do. Those brief sentences constitute a meeting of religious and evolutionary causal mechanisms for social phenomena. But in the context of this study, they do more: they constitute a call to defend the righteousness inherent in ancestor worship, an invalidation of previous views that declared the practice as idolatrous. Given the God-given

commandment to honor parents and the established outcome of ancestor veneration in Chinese society, this practice *had* to contain truth and righteousness, goodness that one denied and sought to eliminate at one's own evolutionary peril.

Given the presence of divinely approved elements in the practice of ancestor veneration, then, Jackson set to the task of parsing the good and true in ancestor veneration from the iniquitous. In essence, he had to determine where obedience to the fifth commandment ended and violation of the first and second, which precluded worship of anything but God, began.[51] Central in his approach was the evolutionary logic he used to argue for the spiritual viability of at least some elements of ancestor worship.

The question of which beliefs or practices led to negative outcomes led Jackson to a very different conclusion than the May Fourth thinkers like Wu Yu. Where Jackson found filial piety to be the sustaining core of Chinese society, Wu Yu, whose 1917 paper was heralded by New Culture and May Fourth iconoclasts, asserted that filial piety was the problematic core that weakened the whole Confucian society. Wu Yu adopted a Eurocentric historical framework, presupposing a developmental model of national history in which China's weakness was the result of its failure to complete the transformation away from feudalism that European societies had undergone. In his attack on the Confucian social order, Wu Yu cut to the heart of the matter by outlining the history of filial piety's enshrinement in Chinese classical literature. He quoted the Tang Emperor Xuanzong, who described filial piety as the basis of all teachings. In a Confucian system, one's ability to fulfill the requirements of filiality toward one's

[51] Jackson, "Ancestral Worship," 217, 219, 222, 231-2.

parents signaled one's fitness to perform the duties of a civil servant. Thus, being a filial son was not an entirely disinterested choice; it was also one means by which one proved one's suitability for an official position in the government. Wu Yu pointed out that the basis of filial piety was respecting the authority of those above one, and thus bringing order, not rebellion or chaos, to society. From this perspective, he pointed out, the Confucian system was inherently conservative.

The fatal flaw in this conservative system, argued Wu Yu, was its one-sided enforcement of what ought to be bilateral responsibilities. Its central tenet was filial piety, but filial piety is the name only for what is expected of subordinates (sons, subjects): loyalty, service, and obedience. The counterpart virtue to filial piety is benevolence, the treatment which rulers and fathers owe their subordinates, but Wu Yu complained that the Confucian system failed to take benevolence seriously. He claimed it exacted no punishment on the parent or ruler who failed to treat their children or subjects benevolently.[52] Wu Yu's critique of Confucianism points to a solution: increase benevolence to balance the relationships. As chapters one and five of this dissertation discuss, the Christianize the Home Movement sought to train parents for greater benevolence and love, perhaps in a desire to heal the ills caused by the imbalance Wu described. One pastor Xu Shengyan, for example, spoke at an early Home Committee meeting about the need to bind families together in love through benevolence (*ren'ai*), equality, and freedom.[53] Elsewhere, the Home Committee's focus on parent education

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[52] Wu Yu. "Jiazu zhidu," 61-66.
[53] *ZQJX di'er jie nianhui baogao,* 149.

indicated a move toward the sense that parents had duties, and children, rights in the family.

Wu Yu's article followed up on one written by Yi Baisha (1886-1921) a year earlier, which outlined how Confucianism – and Confucius himself – had become the tool of despotism. Wu asserted that this system was going to be eliminated in the natural selection process that would give rise to a republic, and called for steps to actively make that "natural" selection happen.[54] Wu's article was extremely important to the radical intellectuals of the 1910s and 1920s, who wanted to help make China fit to join the historical competition of nations.

While it is clear that Jackson shared many elements of Wu Yu's thinking, including a vision of societies as all progressing along a single national trajectory set by Western nations and an assumption that Social Darwinism functioned at the civilizational level, his conclusion about the problems in Chinese society were quite different. Jackson's notion that filial piety was the spirit of obedience to the fifth commandment, the commandment to "honor thy father and thy mother," precluded discarding it. For him the whole system was not a problem; his task was to parse the components that were destructive from those that were sustaining.

The idea that Christianity in China was locked in a contest for survival was on the mind of many Christian writers. Successive anti-Christian movements, from the Boxer uprising to the 1922 student anti-Christian movement to the 1927 murders in Nanjing reminded Christians of their vulnerable position in Chinese society. So the study of

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[54] Wu Yu, "Jiazu zhidu," 62, 64.

religion with regard to its ability to compete in a Social Darwinist competition had real practical application. One of the ways that this sense of fatal competition manifested itself was through discussion of allies. Some Christian writers depicted Christianity as paired with science or rationality against the forces of superstition, like one article that referred to truth as "the noblest characteristic and richest fruit of the scientific method." The author, Sowerby, explicitly embarked on a project of assessing and ranking religions, clearly with the assumption (protestations about the "complete fairness" of his approach notwithstanding) that Christianity was already the developmental pinnacle of religion.[55]

We can connect this comparative religion tautological view of religious evolution with claims that Christianity aligned with scientific rationalism. Many progressive Chinese Christians foregrounded their socially conscious, rationalistic thinking, emphasizing its contrast with superstitious traditions.[56] The alignment of Christianity and rationality against Chinese religions was sometimes part of a vision of the modernizing forces of history marching forward with unstoppable force, tearing down superstition. Such statements were not always written with unqualified triumphalism. Addison's 1925 article, written for a Western, scholarly readership, advocated a "scientific and sympathetic study of ancestor-worship as the most important religious phenomenon in

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[55] Arthur Sowerby, "Our Attitude Towards Chinese Religions." *Chinese Recorder* 48.5 (May 1917), 296 and 299. Quote italicized in original.

[56] "Fei Jidutu jiating zongjiao taolun wenti" [Discussion questions on non-Christian family religion] in *Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui Huadongqu Jiduhua jiating yundong lingxiu yanjiuhui baogaoshu*, (English Title: Report of the East China Conference for Leaders of the Christianizing the Home Movement] (Shanghai: NCC of China, 1930), 22-3. Xu Yiqing, "Wuhou de wenti" [The problem of having no heir], in Zhonghua Jidujiao nuqingnianhui quanguo xiehui bianjibu [Editorial Department, Young Women's Christian Association], ed., *Jiating wenti taolunji yi ce* (English title: "Home Problems") (Shanghai, Zhonghua Jidujiao nuqingnianhui quanguo xiehui bianjibu, 1927), does not refer explicitly to rationality, but employs rational logic and sociological arguments to counter practices that privileged the ancestors over the living and went to socially harmful lengths to procure heirs. Cheng, "Report of the Special Committee on the Chinese Church," 366 disparages aspects of ancestor worship as superstitious.

the life of the people." He clearly believed in the parsing process that Jackson had begun, in which some elements of ancestor worship were noble and expressive of principles of which God approved, while others were destructive. "Science will surely serve as the ally of Christ's religion in purifying the worship of ancestors of all fear and falsehood, so that what it contains of living truth may abide as a treasured possession," he wrote.[57] The forces of progress seemed obviously to be moving against the false and superstitious elements of ancestor worship.

Other Christian writers found in other religions, and especially the "pure" Chinese teachings of classical Confucianism, possible allies against the forces of secularism that they feared would soon threaten all spirituality. Jackson's 1907 report included a potent call for alliance with Chinese religion; Christianity's very survival seemed to rest on the possibility provided by the forces of spirituality still alive in the cultural heritage of this rapidly secularizing nation. Some, like Jackson, favored first one, then the other position, heralding the rationalizing processes that would loosen superstition's hold on the one hand, but also hoping that Christianity could draw on the strength of Chinese religious traditions to promote its superior spirituality.[58]

Benevolent Essentialism

In the parallel fights for survival imagined by Christians in China and by radical May Fourth intellectuals, each group turned to the project of identifying the essence of

[57] Addison, "Chinese Ancestor-Worship and Protestant Christianity," 148-9.
[58] Jackson, "Ancestral Worship," 232, 245; T. W. Douglas James, "The Christian Approach to Ancestor Worship," 729-30.

the Chinese identity. Neither group's approach really fits the postcolonial notion of "strategic essentialism," for neither was seeking to rule the group it essentialized. Chinese and Western Christians sought to identify the heart of the Chinese identity out of a different, complex set of motivations. Some sought to understand it so they could preserve it and respect it, working to make a theology that upheld it. Others likely just feared the consequences of continuing to denigrate Chinese culture in the face of anti-imperialist nationalism. The term I use to refer to the Christians' essentializing project is intentionally ambiguous, as the term "benevolent" can be used as praise or with irony in reference to one whose motives are alternately altruistic or tied up in self-importance. I am sure that in some cases both uses of this term fit. Either way, the essentializer styles himself an ally. The debate about ancestor worship was a negotiation of collective identity, and the power plays that were no doubt a part of it did not always define it. The story of this chapter and the next is the story of a transition from a situation in which Westerners set the norms and made the calls to a more mutually-construed set of defining beliefs, a praxis more open to cultural osmosis.

Francis Wei sought the essence of contemporary Chinese identity in its ancient religion. Wei explicitly found common cause with others who sought to understand the Chinese people by understanding their religious past. He argued that such a study was "not to be monopolized by the theologians. Its interest will be participated in as well by the historian and the politician, as it helps in no ordinary degree to elucidate the history and to account for the peculiar characteristics of a people."[59] Wei was making a case for

[59] Francis Wei, "Religious Beliefs" Part I, 319.

the importance of religion to the many people, including many intellectuals and statesmen, who were trying to understand the essence of the Chinese character in an effort to negotiate with modernizing and imperialist forces. In the 1890s, for instance, in an effort to preserve Confucianism against the tide of modernizing change, Kang Youwei had proposed the adoption of a blend of Confucianism and Christianity as the national religion of China. In 1913, just two years after Wei's article was published, proposals to make Confucianism (not the Christian-Confucian blend Kang had envisioned) the national religion were publically debated, and eventually voted down in parliament.[60] In trying to instate a national religion, reformers were adopting a sort of self-directed strategic essentialism, identifying a powerful core to Chinese identity around which their changing society could orient itself. Wei was actively contributing to this essentializing effort, using a comparative religion approach to look to the past in order to truly understand the nature of Chinese culture.[61]

While Wei described his essentializing goal as inimical to comparative religion, others thought it possible to distill the nation's identity through understanding its religion without the need to compare that religion to Christianity. Some wrote about ancestor worship and filial piety in a scholarly way, digging into and explicating classical texts. In 1924 the "National Learning Research Society" section of the YMCA's *Qingnian jinbu* published an article by Wu Jinding, the archaeologist who later discovered the Longshan culture. Despite publishing in a Christian venue, Wu never mentioned Christianity. His

[60] Goossaert, "Republican Church Engineering," 220.
[61] Wei, "Religious Beliefs" Part I, 319, and Part II, 414-15.

article was based on copious quotes from the classics that aided him in laying out and celebrating filial piety as an ethical principle.[62]

For some, like Wu Jinding, a framework that relied on ranking Chinese religions against Christianity was apparently irrelevant. This sense of irrelevance can be seen also in a little Christian prayer published as part of Chen Chonggui's (Marcus Cheng's) magazing *Budao zazhi* (Evangelize Magazine). The prayer includes the following appeal: "Again we ask our Lord to cause every family in the Chinese Republic to all receive your Holy Spirit, and become completely Christianized model families, with husband and wife harmonious, brothers respectful in their treatment of each other, *children filial to parents and parents benevolent to children*, practicing self-restraint in love to each other, that they may enter that gate of eternal happiness."[63] This prayer models an unproblematic melding of Confucian ideals (filial piety and benevolence) with a Christian model for family happiness. For many, though, the cultural melding process was not as unproblematic as Chen Chonggui made it seem. Some, like Fan Zimei and E.R. Hughes, presented thoughtfully informative (in Hughes's case, quite academic) information about ancestor worship and filial piety respectively with the goal of considering what Christianity should do about each.[64]

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[62] Wu Jinding. "Zhongguo xiaodao yaoyi" [Key points about China's way of filial piety]. *Qingnian Jinbu* vol. 76 (Oct. 1924), 48-54. An article James Thayer Addison wrote in 1924 does not refer to Christianity or a comparative study or religion. His goal was to explicate ancestor worship in order to allow others to accurately answer the question of whether ancestor worship was religious. The article contains no comparative or ranking language beyond any implied in the question. James Thayer Addison, "The Modern Chinese Cult of Ancestors." *The Journal of Religion* 4.5 (Sept. 1924), 492-503.
[63] Jiang Changchuan, "Jiduhua jiating qiwen" [Prayer to Christianize the Home]. *Budao zazhi* 5.2 (1931), 65. Emphasis mine.
[64] Fan Zimei [Bihui, pseud.], "Zhongguo jisi zuzong de wojian," 15-20; Hughes, "The Religious Experiment of Hsiao," 1-31.

Some writers explicitly rejected or questioned the ranking of religions and the imperial project behind it. Fan Zimei, for instance, took on a defensive tone in discussing the ancient practices of filial piety. Fan wrote, "I think that for the past two thousand years the reason why Chinese people's morality has not inevitably degenerated to the lowest point is because all the people have it in their hearts to respect heaven and love the ancestors." After going on to discuss abuses and corruptions of the practice of ancestor veneration, Fan tries to remove some of the shame often associated with that corruption. "My country's cultural practice of ancestor veneration has been transmitted down from ancient times, so … it is hard to avoid departures. … These corruptions are thick, and they are nothing to be surprised at!" In the conclusion of the article, Fan brings up the history of the Catholic church in China, pointing out that the previous hundred years of Protestantism had "followed the same disastrous road" as the pope who outlawed ancestor worship, "leading to a bias [against Christianity] from Chinese society. How many people have thirsted for righteousness and sought the Way but because of the ancestral veneration problem, in the end feel that between their environment, customs and conscience there is discord, and feel they cannot easily throw themselves into it. Actually, Christian belief in God does not conflict with [the injunction to] 'not forget the ancestors' through memorial veneration."[65] Perhaps emboldened by the anti-imperialist milieu, or perhaps frustrated by watching avoidable anti-Christian sentiment mount in recent years, Fan Zimei was willing to push back against the traditional stance of the church toward Chinese culture. Fan's argument points out an ironic contradiction in Protestant practice;

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[65] Fan Zimei [Bihui, pseud.], "Zhongguo jisi zuzong de wojian," 17, 19, 20.

while sometimes justifying their rejection of ancestor worship through reference to the Catholic errors of saint-worship, that rejection constituted a refusal to step away from a pattern established by the Catholic church.

Some missionaries voiced similar frustrations with the rejection of such a strong and meaningful cultural practice, and in so doing, began to question the moral ascendency of Western Christianity. In 1910, W. Nelson Bitton wrote an article in which he turned a parsing eye toward Christianity, asking which Christian beliefs were central or essential and which were not. Bitton insisted that "[o]ur action and attitude should be such as to make it evident that while Christianity is bound to develop certain aspects of existing national life in a given direction wherever it is preached, it is no part of its programme to denationalize" the Chinese.[66] In 1916, E.E. Jones pushed missionaries to question whether they might have overweening intent, considering whether their goal to help "mould the life of the nation" might in fact be based on the idea of recreating the Chinese people in their own image.[67]

For decades there had been these nagging voices in the Christian community questioning the framework within which Western Christianity as embodied by Western culture was seen as the apex of religious development. In the 1920s, as the anti-Christian movement peaked, this pushback grew. One Chinese Christian, C. C. Nieh, expressed his frustrations with missionaries and the teachings of the church in the mid-1920s. Like Fan Zimei, Nieh blamed the Christian attitude toward ancestor worship for Christianity's

[66] W. Nelson Bitton, "Some Chinese Feasts and the Christian Attitude Towards Them." *Chinese Recorder* 41.4 (April 1910), 271, 278.
[67] Jones, "The Attitude of the Chinese Church toward Non-Christian Festivals," 167.

failure to spread widely in China, but Nieh used language that criticized the spirit of ruthless competition that he observed in Christian preachers. “Even the offering of sacrifice to ancestors is considered to be offensive to God and the offender is said to be bound to receive punishment from heaven. Vulgar, selfish, and jealous preachers invented such sayings as the above in the hope that they can make their religion a monopoly.” Clearly influenced by recent anti-Christian writings, Nieh implied that these preachers are agents of cultural imperialism. He used the language of survival of the fittest and placed anti-Christian Chinese in a powerful position when he wrote that many preachers of Christianity “have produced nothing but troubles and evils…. I am therefore, of the opinion that if we are to prevent Christianity from being completely stamped out, we must first of all arouse the preachers. They should get rid of their nonsensical talk and narrow views. They must in all places and at all times respect our own national customs, taking the strong points to support themselves. Only thus can it be expected that they can preserve their religion.”[68] In a spirit of loyal opposition, Nieh insisted that his nation’s cultural practices deserved more respect than they received from Christians. Nieh and others found wells of national pride that fueled their rejection of the Western teleology of progress.

Like Bitton, Nieh imagined applying the same treatment to Westerners that Chinese were receiving. “If there were Condufianists (sic) preaching their doctrines in Europe and American and if they were to tell the peoples there that they must offer to the deceased incense, candles, wine and bread instead of flowers, or they would offend

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[68] Nieh, C.C., [Untitled], n.d., 1-2.

against God, can this be called reasonable and in accordance with the truth? It only restricts and narrows their teachings! It merely reduces the true value of their doctrines!"[69] His willingness to push back against a hegemonic church structure that excluded people on the basis of what truth claims they could make puts Nieh in a very different category from, for example, Wei, who used the Western-centric language of evolutionary progression fourteen years earlier.[70]

Writers like Nieh, Bitton, and Jones rhetorically sought to level the playing field. Another writer who voiced discontent and insisted that Christianity be examined with a critical eye was Zhu Jingyi. Like Nieh, Zhu esteemed the teachings of Confucius highly and critiqued the Christian church for neglecting the principle of filial piety in its teachings.[71] By providing a corrective to Christianity, Zhu implicitly leveled the playing field, a move that we will discuss more fully in the next chapter.

By coining the term "benevolent essentialism," I invoke the notion of strategic essentialism as a departing point. What we see happening in Christian writings on ancestor worship is very different from the postcolonial idea of strategic essentialism, for Christians essentializing Chinese culture did it with a goal not to rule more effectively, but to successfully merge Christian and Chinese belief systems in order to preserve both and effect a satisfying and lasting union between them. Certainly hegemonic power was involved here; it was this perceived power that Nieh railed against, after all. But turning Nieh's view back on itself, we see a Christianity that was vulnerable to accusations of

[69] Ibid., 7.
[70] Ibid., 3, 8, 18.
[71] Zhu Jingyi. "Jidujiao de xiaodao guan" [The Protestant View of Filial Piety]. *Qingnian jinbu* 79 (Jan. 1925), 24-31.

imperialism. While some would continue to cling to notions of the unquestionable superiority of Western norms of Christianity, others recognized the problematic nature of elements of the conversation and sought to create, as a transnational community, new modes of discussing and addressing religious differences.

This chapter shows that Chinese and Western Christian thinkers began to question assumptions of Western cultural superiority in the second, third, and fourth decades of the twentieth century. They sought allies in Chinese religions against the tide of secularization, and aligned themselves with rationality, modernizing forces in opposition to superstitious elements of Chinese tradition. Moving away from visions of a Social Darwinist clash of civilizations, some writers engaged in benevolent essentialism, defending the mixture of Chinese culture with Christianity in the hope that both would be strengthened. In the next chapter we turn to one major mechanism that Christians used to express a post-evolutionary relationship between Christianity and the Chinese principle of filial piety.

Chapter Three – "Not to Destroy, but to Fulfill:" Christianizing the Ancestors

> "Our unity in Christ is not a theme for aspiration; it is an experienced fact. We can speak of it with boldness because our Conference is an illustration of it. We are drawn from many nations and from many different communions, from Churches with centuries of history behind them and from the younger Churches whose story covers but a few decades; but we are one in Christ."
>
> *A Message from the Oxford Conference to the Christian Churches*, 1937[1]

In the previous chapter I charted how participants in Protestant conversations about ancestor worship stepped past the notion that Western Christianity was the winner in an evolutionary contest of religions. I noted how some, like C.C. Nieh, pushed past the idea that a Social Darwinist contest of civilization was the way things were and should be. Those who left behind assumptions of Western Christian ascendancy and oppositional relations between whole cultures developed a more nuanced approach to the study of culture and religion; we saw evidence that Chinese and Western writers were seeking to discern and distill the primordial, inspired essence of Chinese culture out of a benevolent motivation, a desire to preserve it. We also saw evidence that some, Chinese and Western, turned a critical and parsing eye to Christianity, asking what aspects of current practice were tied with divine truths, and which were merely disposable cultural accruals.

In addition to examining the "sending" culture through which Christianity was brought to China, questions of what to make of "receiving" cultures came to the fore for missionaries in many parts of the world. At the center of these concerns in the Chinese

[1] "A Message from the Oxford Conference to the Christian Churches," in *The Message and Decisions of Oxford on Church, Community and State*. (Chicago, IL: Published for Universal Christian Council by Willett, Clark & Co, 1937?), 3.

Protestant community was family, because of old disputes over ancestor worship. This chapter discusses the theological mechanism by which some Protestant Christians in China oriented themselves anew, finding the ability to leave behind the hegemonic language of "heathenism" and create a vision of a more synthetic Christianity.

One of the central mechanisms for this paradigm shift was the fulfillment theory. A formulation of the relationship between Christian truth and the cultures in which it took root, the theology of fulfillment provided a gentle perspective on the past of Chinese religion. When acceptance of fulfillment theory or theology became a trend, it propelled members of the Protestant Community toward a new vision of Christianity, a common identity that Christians of different national origins could embrace and be enlivened by: the idea of a worldwide Christian brotherhood.

The transition toward a broader, more synthesizing vision of Christianity was experienced by Chinese Christians as well as missionaries, and Chinese believers' views were central to conversations about fulfilment theology. As church leaders and theologians or as native experts on religion and the classics, they contributed insights on whether and how to fold Chinese religious beliefs and practices into Christianity.

Fulfilment Theory

Fulfilment theory was the idea that allowed the door to cultural hybridity to open for many Protestants, ultimately enabling a new vision of communal identity among Christians in China. As such, it is identifiable as part of the liberal school of Christian thought in China that emerged and clashed with more conservative views during the fundamentalist-modernist divide of the early twentieth century. This divide has received

scholarly attention as a major watershed moment in the division of American Protestantism, with some disagreement as to its origins. Some scholars describe the divide as having American origins but spreading so far as to include the mission fields.[2] Kevin Xiyi Yao describes the fundamentalist movement as arising in China in response to liberal thought that flowed there from the West.[3] Lian Xi's work suggests that the mission field was actually the crucible from which liberal theology was born.[4] This chapter finds that the old issue of Chinese ancestor worship led to change and creativity in Chinese and Western Christian thought that contributed to liberal worldviews.

In this study, which focuses primarily on liberal or modernist thinkers and the moderates who shared some views with them, I find that there are not always strict or clear divisions between modernists and fundamentalists in the articles published. The historical hindsight that allows us to see that such a divide was occurring does not mean that the split was clean or that all writers fell easily and comfortably into one or another camp. My study explores some of the variation and nuance in the conversation about ancestor worship and filial piety, and finds a spectrum of stances and a slow reshaping of many people's thought that did not in the end provide a consensus.

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[2] James Allen Patterson, "The Loss of a Protestant Missionary Consensus: Foreign Missions and the Fundamentalist-Modernist Conflict," in Joel A. Carpenter and Wilbert R. Shenk, eds., *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1990* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 73. Melissa Inouye refers to this idea, citing Daniel Bays. Melissa Wei-Tsing Inouye, "A Religious Rhetoric of Competing Modernities: Christian Print Culture in Late Qing China," in Song Gang, ed., *Reshaping the Boundaries: The Christian Intersection of China and the West in the Modern Era*. Hong Kong University Press, 2016, 108.

[3] Kevin Xiyi Yao, "Contending for the Faith: a Study of the Early 20th century Fundamentalism in China in comparison with Korea and Japan." In Jan A.B. Jongeneel et al., eds. *Christian Presence and Progress in North-East Asia: Historical and Comparative Studies*. New York: Peter Lang, 2011, 42-3.

[4] Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries*, 194, 216, and passim.

In his monograph, *The Conversion of Missionaries: Liberalism in American Protestant Missions in China, 1907-1932*, Lian Xi examines the shifts toward liberal thought undergone by many Western missionaries who found their worldviews challenged by the good they found in the Chinese culture and religious teachings. My study focuses on ancestor worship and filial piety as a single debate of central importance in that shift. I highlight the voices of Chinese participants in this debate, arguing that Chinese Christian thinkers were also influenced and changed by liberalizing trends in Christian thought. They were also not just heavily involved in these debates, but often to be thanked for the development of their missionary counterparts' broadened worldview.

Fulfilment theory is a way of looking at the relationship between Christianity and pre-Christian cultures. It is based on the New Testament verse in which Jesus succinctly summarized his intention vis-à-vis the Jewish Law and Prophets thus: "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."[5] The notion that Christianity could accept and add to existing cultures, rather than opposing them, was employed to discuss the relationship of multiple native religions to Christianity. Its proponents asserted that, far from being the works of Satan, native religions could evince God's workings among pre-Christian peoples, for whom Christianity could constitute a step up, a next stage of religious progression.

Fulfilment theory was not a new idea in the twentieth century. Anthony E. Clark points out that the Jesuit missionary Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) had found a Western theological basis for the idea of God speaking to "pagan nations" in Justin Martyr, a

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[5] King James Version, Matthew 5:17.

second-century Christian, as well as in the Book of Acts.[6] In terms of the actual use of the phrase “not to destroy but to fulfill,” Paul Cohen’s article, “Christian Missions and Their Impact to 1900,” notes that some non-majority group of mainly Protestant missionaries were accepting of and respectful toward Chinese culture “and defined their mission more in terms of ‘fulfilment’ of this culture than its destruction.”[7] Norman J. Girardot reads Cohen as declaring fulfilment theory to have arisen by roughly the 1890s, and pushes the timeline earlier to the 1870s, finding evidence of it in the writings of James Legge, Timothy Richards, and W.A.P. Martin.[8] Girardot also points to the history of J.N. Farquhar, a missionary in India who brought the notion of fulfilment to prominence there, having inherited it through a line of thinkers from Max Müller, the father of comparative religion. [9]

Clearly, fulfilment theory and related ideas were influencing Western Europeans around the globe by the end of the nineteenth century. While historian R.E. Reid never uses the term fulfilment, he notes a similar idea at work in the minds of missionary John Henry Holmes and the anthropologists with whom he collaborated in Papua. Reid sees this more accepting and respectful mindset toward native religions as arising under the influence of two new academic disciplines, comparative religion and anthropology,

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[6] Anthony E. Clark, “Introduction: a Voluntary Exile: Crisis, Conflict, and Accommodation After Matteo Ricci,” in Anthony E. Clark, ed., *Voluntary Exile: Chinese Christianity and Cultural Confluence since 1552*. Cranbury, JN: Lehigh University Press, 2013, 5-6.

[7] Cohen goes on to make the following observation, for which my research thus far has provided neither support nor conclusive rebuttal, given the different time periods on which we focus: “oddly enough, the missionaries who went farthest in this direction were precisely those who were most insistent on the need for a comprehensive overhauling of Chinese ways.” Paul A. Cohen, “Christian Missions and Their Impact to 1900,” in Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, Volume 10, Part I (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 541.

[8] Norman J. Girardot, *The Victorian Translation of China: James Legge’s Oriental Pilgrimage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 409, 450, 632 n. 115.

[9] Sharpe, *Not to Destroy But to Fulfil*, 13-14, 23.

which had developed in Great Britain after 1860. He also noted that liberalizing influence could be seen in the approach of the London Missionary Society starting in the 1870s, including the idea that "the gospel should be presented within the context of pre-existing beliefs in local religion, thus allowing it to appear as the 'full blossom on the tree which had been there from the beginning.'"[10]

In his study of the Protestants of Fuzhou, Ryan Dunch indicates briefly that the fulfilment theory was embraced by Chinese Christians, not just Western missionaries; "Protestants generally expressed respect for the moral tenets of the Confucian tradition (albeit sometimes refracted through a Christian lens), while asserting that Christianity could 'fulfill the Law.'" By way of supporting his claim, Dunch cites the translation of the Four Books into the Fuzhou dialect by a Chinese Methodist preacher, and their distribution through Methodist churches.[11] Melissa Inouye's work on the True Jesus Church shows that the idea had spread to or arisen independently to some even in that very mission-independent indigenous church.[12]

The topic of fulfilment theory in China has not been examined in depth beyond Girardot's masterful work (in which the topic is explored by name primarily in the footnotes), and Girardot's time frame is some decades earlier than this study's. Lian Xi's book addresses fulfillment theory briefly, but only as part of its broader story of the great sympathy many Westerners developed for practitioners of Chinese religions and those

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[10] R.E. Reid, "John Henry Holmes in Papua: Changing Missionary Perspectives on Indigenous Cultures, 1890-1914." *The Journal of Pacific History* 13.3 (1978), 174-5.
[11] Ryan Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants*, 6, 204-5 note 12.
[12] Melissa Inouye, *China's True Jesus*, forthcoming. Inouye quotes one Deacon An, whom she interviewed, as saying "Even Laozi [老子] and the *Dao De Jing* [道德经] were intended by God to lay a foundation for the True Jesus Church."

religious teachings themselves. This chapter addresses fulfilment theory as an intellectual development of great importance to a cultural and theological shift in China, a shift with implications for the indigenization and hybridization of Christianity in China.

Groundwork for fulfilment theory's spread among missionaries in post-Boxer China was laid in 1907 in the report of Jackson's Committee on Ancestral Worship to the Centenary Missionary Conference, with all its echoes of W.A.P. Martin's 1890 speech. I suspect that the opposition Christians experienced through the Boxer Uprising prepared some for a more informed and sympathetic approach to Chinese religion, which perhaps accounts for the warmer reception afforded Jackson's ideas than to pre-1900 calls for sympathy. In his report, Jackson asserted that there were some "true instincts" behind the practices of ancestor worship.[13] The notion that there were truths buried in Chinese culture gained traction over the course of the next few years' debates. In 1925, James Addison posited that true Christianity required seeking a constructive solution to disagreements over ancestor worship. He invoked a Pauline metaphor in which the Christian church is envisioned as a body connected to and ruled by the head, which is Christ: "If the church is to be true to the purpose and practice of its Head," he wrote, "it must seek not to destroy but to fulfill."[14] By using this quote, Addison implicitly compared ancestral veneration to the Hebrew Law of Moses. Putting ancient Chinese teachings in the same category as the law given by Moses opens the possibility that such practices as ancestor worship were also of holy origin and contained prophetic truth. Many Christian thinkers ascribed to the notion that the truthful and right parts of Chinese

[13] Jackson, "Ancestral Worship," 242.
[14] Addison, "Chinese Ancestor-Worship and Protestant Christianity," 146-7. Ephesians 5:23.

tradition should be given space and allowed to blossom in their true and Christian form, while corrupt or degenerate cultural accruals should fall away.[15]

The fulfillment theory that Addison described was the idea that the Gospel of Jesus could enliven and fulfill, even redeem and exalt, the noble principles taught by other religions and cultures. This is hardly an unbiased method of comparing religions, but it is, as Reid noted, several degrees more sympathetic and respectful than "save the heathens" approaches that characterized many missionary writings.[16] Historian James Patterson finds the explanation for the development of newer and more sensitive approaches to non-Christian religions in academic discussions. He claims that "comparative religion studies influenced discussion of non-Christian faiths and defused some of the pre-World War I triumphalism of the missionary movement."[17] Whether an evangelizing theology can ever be truly free of triumphalism is a matter worthy of debate; still, the articles examined in this chapter show that in early twentieth-century China, fulfillment theory enlarged the space for dialogue and encouraged respect between different religious traditions.

This chapter will examine a range of approaches to fulfilment theology in early twentieth-century China as it was applied to debates about family and the practice of ancestor worship, highlighting the voices of some of the Chinese church members who used the concept. The writings examined below will show three different deployments of the principle of acting "not to destroy, but to fulfil": first, an instrumental use of the term

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[15] Addison, "Chinese Ancestor-Worship and Protestant Christianity," 148.
[16] Reid, "Changing Missionary Perspectives on Indigenous Cultures," 185.
[17] Patterson, "The Loss of a Protestant Missionary Consensus," 85.

to show the Chinese that their criticisms of Christian imperialism had not fallen on deaf ears (or were unfounded) and to reduce obstacles to conversion; second, an altruistic effort to increase missionary and Church sympathy toward Chinese converts and their culture, making the church a warmer, healthier place for Chinese Christians and thus aiding their psychological and social well-being; and third, an expansive vision of Christian theology in which the Chinese culture was an expression of God's will, a revelation with the power to enrich world Christianity. While elements of cultural pride may have remained for many, fulfillment theory helped others to unseat the notion that Western Christianity, the ideal religion, was already at the pinnacle of religious evolution from a position of superiority.

A New Way of Working within an Old Hierarchy of Religions

Some would argue that the notion of a fulfilment theology is inherently imperialist; it presupposes the superiority of Christianity and therefore, the greater enlightenment of its bearers as compared to receiving peoples. Though this may be true, we cannot impute equal levels of imperialism to all. In the writers whose work is analyzed below, we will find a broad range of approaches to "not destroying, but fulfilling" the beliefs or impulses of preexisting religions. First we examine some thinkers who worked within existing Western scholarly notions of a strict, usually developmental, hierarchy of religions. Within this group there is a range of sympathy

levels, but the idea that essentially Western Christianity was superior was not questioned.[18]

We see an example of the most reluctant adoption of fulfilment theology in the 1910 writings of Reverend W.A. Cornaby. Cornaby's goal in studying Chinese practices was to eliminate superstition by determining the psychological needs of the Chinese and meeting them better by teaching Christianity. Cornaby wrote that his task was important because a "veritable disease of democracy" was causing such a loss of authority that spirituality in its entirety was on the chopping block. Cornaby discussed his goal with explicit distaste for the Chinese beliefs – he describes engaging with Chinese "superstitions" as "stooping to conquer." Stooping to conquer was, he assured readers, "the attitude to be commended" because "God did so of old in two striking instances—making use of existing and superstitious material." Cornaby's intent was surely to emulate God, but the parallel he draws between God's treatment of biblical men and his own approach to Chinese beliefs widened the distance between a God-like Cornaby and simple Chinese dupes of a silly superstition. The flow of truth was pictured as proceeding from West to East in a downhill, decidedly unilateral way.

God used existing religious forms to teach people greater truths, so by teaching Chinese people Christian doctrines by connecting them to existing Chinese beliefs, Cornaby was simply using God's own pedagogy. What sets Cornaby apart from others whose writings we will examine shortly is the fact that he seems to have been completely closed to the idea that the progenitors of non-Christian religions were themselves

[18] Cf. Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries,* 17.

receiving messages from God.[19] He seems to have felt compelled to affirm Chinese inferiority, for he expressed reluctance each time he approached the idea that there was some truth in the Chinese belief system.

It is very possible that Cornaby took this tone in anticipation of the response of his missionary colleagues; by then fifty years old, Cornaby may have felt obligated to justify such liberality to other missionaries of an earlier generation or a more conservative bent. His 1914 book teaching missionaries the art of letter writing in Chinese acknowledges the presence of "intimate Chinese friends" in missionaries lives, and, at least where letter-writing is concerned, he was eager to oppose notions of Chinese "arrested development."[20] In 1910 he may have anticipated negative responses from his readers. He positioned himself as progressive in his openness to China's religions, and anticipated objection to his project of examining Chinese beliefs for core ideas to which he could draw Christian parallels. "And it may be argued with some reason that if the whole native press of China condemns superstition root and branch (including modern Chinese Buddhism and Taoism as a whole) it is hardly befitting the stated representatives of the truth as it is in Jesus to rake among the ash heaps of decadent faiths to find bits of truth here and there for exploitation." Cornaby imagined his critics thinking of certain of the writings of the biblical apostle Paul, in which he condemns "heathenism," or idolatry.[21] In response, Cornaby brought up Paul's famous "Sermon on the Unknown

[19] W.A. Cornaby, "Christian Suggestions in Chinese Superstitions," 257-9.
[20] W. Arthur Cornaby, *Chinese Letter-Writing for Missionaries* (Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1914), i-ii, 1-3. Archive.org/details/chineseletterwri00cornrich
[21] Romans 1:20-21.

God."[22] Addressing the polytheistic people of Athens, Paul blended theologies, asserting that the god that they honored in ignorant anonymity by bowing before an altar labeled "to the Unknown God" was in fact the Judeo-Christian creator and Father-God. So while Cornaby did not contradict his imaginary critics' belief that heathenism is apostasy, a fall from truth that must be recovered from, he felt compelled to correct the idea that one ought to uniformly condemn it as such. To Paul, it seems, "heathenism is both an apostasy and a quest;" the altar to the unknown God, a sign of yearning toward a fuller truth.[23] This idea even rescues apostasy from full condemnation, because for apostasy to exist, there must be a preexisting possession of truth. Cornaby writes that "the ancestral worshipper feels that *somewhere in the far horizon of the past the heavenly touched the earthly;* as did the Jews and as do we."[24] Cornaby felt himself to be pushing the envelope by being so sympathetic, but his use of fulfillment theology was instrumental, presented as an evangelical tool; his interest in Chinese culture does not seem to acknowledge any divinity in it or any possibility that he could learn from it.

For Cornaby, superstition was an immediate enemy from which the Chinese should be saved. When he offered Christian teachings as fulfilments of or improvements on Chinese beliefs, he shifted the meaning of the Chinese practices in the direction of metaphor. For example, he referred to the practice of having a spirit screen or rock block the doorway of a house with a straight alley leading to the door. The rock or screen placed there was meant to prevent the entry of path-traveling ghosts or evil influences.

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[22] Acts 17: 22-31.
[23] Cornaby, "Christian Suggestions in Chinese Superstitions," 258.
[24] Ibid., 260. Emphasis in original.

After jabbing at these alleys for typically being "badly in need of a quantity of literal *feng* and *shui* (wind and water) to ventilate and flush them out," Cornaby created a Christian object lesson from the rocks used as spirit screens. He pointed out that the spiritual power of a rock from Mount Tai is an image that resonates for Christians, who believe in Christ as the "'Rock of Ages,'" the foundation and cornerstone of Christian life and character. Utilizing the metaphor of Jesus as rock as superior to the physical rocks used as spirit screens, Cornaby attempted to pull his listeners toward both Christianity and rationality.[25]

As evidence of the success of Christianity in rooting out superstition, Cornaby reported that in his eighteen years in Hubei, he observed that "scarcely a vestige [of superstition] does remain when Chinese become Christians,"[26] as if that fact spoke to the innate power of Christianity and the depraved nature of Chinese culture, rather than describing a process erasure of existing culture and denial of past beliefs. In the end, especially compared to the other writers whose works on ancestor worship are juxtaposed with his in the April 1910 edition of the *Chinese Recorder*, Cornaby ends up looking callously unaware of the price his converts feel forced to pay upon becoming Christians, and ignorant of the role that he and his missionary associates played in teaching the necessity for such a clean break with their prior practices and beliefs, and the social relations bound up in them. He "stoops" to engage Chinese culture only instrumentally and ultimately with the intent "to conquer."

Some missionaries were forthright about the fact that they sought and considered the opinions of their Chinese colleagues, sharing insights gained from them. Jackson was

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[25] Ibid., 263-4.
[26] Ibid., 258.

one such; in 1907, he referenced papers written for him by Chinese men of education, and sometimes quoting them directly.[27] Much later, in 1933, another missionary named A.J. Brace made a platform for the opinion of some Chinese Christian church leaders by publishing their responses to a set of questions. In response to the question, "How can we incorporate the best beliefs [from ancestor worship] into our Christian Faith?" one person replied: "It is our duty as Christians to protect the best of our culture from idolatry. Claim it for God. Do not destroy but fulfil it like Jesus."[28] While Brace's voice and the voice of his Chinese friend cannot be conclusively parsed here, this statement could be read as an injunction to keep ancestor veneration pure, in the "original" meaning of the Confucian ethical system. It can also be read as a plea to protect ancestor veneration from *accusations* of idolatry within the Christian community, or from accusations of superstition, which could come from both the Christian church and the rationalizing secular world. Either indictment might have necessitated the practice's wholesale abandonment, but claiming it for God and rendering it Christian could allow its maintenance. Here, as in Cornaby's article, we see a distate for superstition, but also the possibility of cultural pride and a willingness to be strategic in order to effect cultural preservation akin to benevolent essentialism. This instrumentality differs from Cornaby's in that it acknowledges something of value in Chinese tradition, something worth retaining on its own merits.

Some missionaries were explicitly sympathetic over the loss that Chinese Christians experienced by ceasing to perform ancestor rites. Reverend Packenham-

[27] Jackson, "Ancestral Worship," 222, 227,

[28] A.J. Brace, "Christianizing Ancestor Reverence," *The Chinese Recorder* 64.11 (Dec. 1933), 793.

Walsh, who wrote in 1910, took an approach that was both sympathetic and open to syncretism. After discussing the deep loss that must be felt by Chinese who completely stopped their practice of memorializing their dead, he reminded readers that Christianity offered a greater hope than ancestor worship - the hope of resurrection. "We give [Chinese converts to Christianity] something worth all their old memorials put together," he wrote, "but we do not give them those external expressions of sympathy which, human nature being what it is, we value ourselves and which they would probably value even more."[29] Packenham-Walsh reproves his fellow missionaries because he recognizes the loss entailed in the cessation of ancestor worship. His view thus stands in contrast to Cornaby's approach and shows us that even among those who would agree about the superiority of Christian beliefs, there was variety in expressions of sympathy.

Packenham-Walsh's paper reveals a focus on the mental or emotional health of Chinese converts. Others also used psychological approaches, wrapping sympathy in rationalist garb. One Chinese leader, Shi Yanfang (Y.F. Shih), expressed a nuanced and psychology-based sense of sympathy in a speech he gave at the 1930 Leadership Conference of the NCC's Christianize the Home Movement. The speech was called "Zhongguo jiqi he fengsu de Jiduhua" ("Christianizing China's Festivals and Customs").[30] "Jesus said once: 'I come not to destroy, but to fulfill,'" Shih explained. "Therefore, I feel that we should not disregard all Chinese festivals and customs but

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[29] Packenham-Walsh, "Memorials to the Dead and their Relation to Christian Practice," 264-265.
[30] Shi Yanfang, "Zhongguo jieqi he fengsu de Jiduhua," [Christianizing Chinese holidays and customs] in Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui ed., *Huadong qu Jiduhua jiating yundong lingxiu yanjiuhui: Jiating wenti yanjiang ji* [Public Addresses of the East China Conference for Leaders of the Christianizing the Home Movement] (Shanghai: National Christian Council of China, 1931), 31-8; Y.F. Shih, "Christianizing China's Festivals and Customs," *The Chinese Recorder* 62.11 (Nov. 1931), 680-85.

should, instead, improve them. At the same time we should guard ourselves against thoughtless speeches on this and that subject without making a study of the psychological and historical background of the particular customs concerned. Certain customs contrary to the tenets of truth and Christianity, should, of course, be dealt with under a different category." Here, as above, the writer's framework is one of sympathy, but sympathy within a rubric that assumes a universal Christian doctrine superior to the indigenous beliefs of China.

In 1928, Fan Zimei used psychology as the rationale when he called for a sympathetic approach to ancestor worship. He said, "We cannot get rid of Ancestor Worship entirely. To try to do so is to work against the psychology of the Chinese people as a whole. People argue that if we want to remember our ancestors we must use other methods. This is quite possible. As it is, Ancestor Worship has become a custom and, besides, nothing in it is utterly wrong. It is an heritage of China's civilization; the basis of good morality and ethics." Fan's words were featured first in a *Chinese Recorder* symposium on ancestor worship in which the writers were all Chinese. Chao Ching Yü concluded with this conservative statement: "According to Christianity, however, we must worship God only. Worship at these [ancestral] shrines, therefore, involves unsatisfactory practices. All people, furthermore, have their origin in God. To worship God is enough. We need not worship others." S.J. Chuan took a more nuanced, but still simple, approach, pointing out that the intent of the worshiper should be taken into account, and that less-educated people more often took superstitious approaches to ancestor worship rather than simply memorializing. The fourth writer, Chiang Liu, took a more sociological approach to the question, pointing out that "While the extreme form of

Ancestor Worship has sacrificed the personality of the younger generation—a most pernicious influence of the institution—the utter disregard of it has over-individualized the youth, who seek for small families, self-enlargement (though not necessarily aggrandizement), and pleasure in this life alone."[31] Chiang's reference to the trend toward nuclear families and his use of the word "personality" signals his awareness of and attention to intellectual debates. As I will discuss further in chapter five, the term "personality" had considerable traction at this point.[32] While the *Chinese Recorder*'s inclusion of a range of views might seem to be a nod toward neutrality, it was a carefully curated selection of voices intending to lead one to an understanding of the complexity of the situation, a complexity that highlighted the value that ancestor worship added to Chinese society and the practice's importance to individual Chinese. In addition, the editorial decision to highlight Chinese voices in the conversation shows a limited effort to respond to calls to put more power in the hands of the Chinese and promote their leadership.

The majority of the writers I have discussed so far were open, to varying degrees, to ancestor worship, while maintaining a framework of Christianity's superiority. There were opponents of such liberal notions who balked at even the notion of fulfilment theory. One such was the fundamentalist W.H. Griffith Thomas, who responded with disdain when a missionary invoked Jesus's words regarding the need to preserve and Christianize good things in Confucianism. Thomas responded to the fulfilment

[31] "Present-Day Attitudes Towards 'Ancestor Worship': A Symposium." *Chinese Recorder* 59.4 (April 1928), 229-31.
[32] Lewis S. C. Smythe, "The Changing Missionary Message," *Chinese Recorder* 60.3 (March 1929), 163.

hypothesis with “another passage in which Jesus declared, ‘The Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil.’”[33]

One whose ideas Thomas likely would have found repugnant was T.W. Douglas James, who, as discussed above, wrote in 1925 about the danger of throwing out the baby of religious sentiment with the bathwater of superstition. For James, the appropriate framework for considering Christianity and ancestor worship was a framework of inevitable replacement; he believed that the power of Christian truths would sweep away the lesser ideals that adherents of ancestor worship clung to. In spite of his protestations that Christian truths were found only “so inadequately, in Ancestor Worship,” James’s final few paragraphs carry a tone of joyful enlightenment. He wrote, “Ancestor Worship has however *become* something much more than that system of beliefs… It has become a symbol of continuity, of regard for those who have borne us, the lines of ancestors who have made *our* work possible: it is an inspiration and hope.” Below, we will discuss in greater detail the doctrinal melding that James seems to have celebrated with deep religious joy. For now I merely note that some who continued to claim the superiority of Christianity over Chinese beliefs were nonetheless drawn to the idea that Chinese beliefs could bring spiritual expansion and enlightenment to Christianity.

A New Historical Trajectory

The writings discussed so far showcase the first two motivations for embracing ancestor worship (and other aspects of Chinese religion and culture): an instrumental

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[33] Quoted in Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries*, 182.

desire to decrease the barriers to Chinese conversion, and sympathy for Chinese people and appreciation of their culture. Now we go on to examine the intellectual steps that moved some to espouse the third deployment of fulfilment theory, the desire for Christianity to be enriched and expanded by the inclusion of Chinese beliefs and practices. By finding truth in the Chinese past, and reading into that truth the idea that God had been speaking to different peoples throughout history, some Christians laid aside Christianity's exclusive claim to truth. Viewing the past of all nations as a rich history of God's inspirations to different people changed the historical trajectory for Christianity; no longer the pinnacle of religious evolution, it was now one among many works in progress, moving toward a future of still greater enlightenment.

Some of the ideas expressed by Jackson in 1907 are helpful to return to here. Jackson's report incorporated elements of the theology of fulfillment, but he used a different term, "Incarnation," to push against the framework of Western Christian superiority. The doctrine of Incarnation is the notion that Christ was the embodiment of God, made physical and vulnerable at the moment of his birth.[34] After first pointing out that Chinese beliefs in the "inter-dependence of the dead and the living" were false, Jackson said he "must here however assert that the instinct underlying the false view is a *true* instinct, and that the religion of the Incarnation leaves no true instinct without provision for its proper satisfaction."[35] Jackson referred to the famous beginning of the Gospel of John, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the

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[34] Brian Hebbelthwaite, "Incarnation," *The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Gordon S. Wakefield (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1983), 210.
[35] Jackson, "Ancestral Worship," 225, 239.

Word was God,"[36] when he wrote that Jesus "was in the world as the Seminal Word giving some light, some fragments of truth even to those who were not privileged to know the full blessings of the Incarnation."[37] The last phrase refers to people who did not see Jesus, God in the flesh; Jackson likely meant this designation to apply civilizationally to peoples who did not know of or have a conviction of Christianity. While there is a logical disjunction here – surely all people who died before Christ's birth could be considered as within the category of those ignorant of the Incarnation – what Jackson seems to be arguing is that divine inspiration or revelation was not restricted to the Hebrews alone in the pre-Christian era. Chinese Christians could look back to their forebears and see God's light manifested in their "true instincts."

One instinct that bespoke divine inspiration was the imperative not to disgrace one's ancestors. Jackson quoted Brooke Westcott, who had written *The Gospel of Life* in 1892, saying that the "characteristic conceptions of China [relating to imperial sacrifice and ancestral worship] become a great prophecy, and bear witness to a hope which will not forever be unsatisfied."[38] Westcott and Jackson imply that contact with Christianity would take the desire for a lasting connection between ancestors and descendants from the realm of prophecy to a hope embodied by Jesus himself – for since his resurrection opened the door to the resurrection of all, he actually embodied the possibility of eternal family bonds. Incarnation thus takes on a second meaning – God made flesh at Jesus's birth, and hope for lasting family bonds made flesh in Jesus's resurrection. The notion of

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[36] King James Version, John 1:1.
[37] Jackson, "Ancestral Worship," 242.
[38] Ibid., 225. Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Gospel of Life: Thoughts Introductory to the Study of Christian Doctrine*, second ed. (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1895), 142.

Incarnation seems to have been foundational for the resolutions passed by Jackson's Ancestral Worship Committee, which include this language: "*recognizing the full provision made in Christianity for the highest development and expression of Filial Piety*, this Conference recommends that greater prominence be given in preaching, in teaching, and in religious observances, to the practical duty of reverence to parents..."[39] The idea that Christianity could provide a fuller expression to Chinese beliefs or impulses also undergirded many later talks and articles on ancestor worship and filial piety.

The tension between impulses to admire other religions and impulses to disparage them as less than Christianity reflects a formulation expressed by Brooke Foss Westcott in the book to which Jackson referred, *The Gospel of Life*. Westcott encouraged the study of other religions in order to identify "the original conceptions to which the several religions bear witness," or in other words, the primordial meaning of various religions. Privileging the primordial, Westcott shares the emphasis on degeneration which we have seen in several other writers' work. Westcott says that a study of these early religious ideas "will serve at once to enlarge and to define our view of man's religious nature; and if so, to illuminate our own faith; for if Christianity be, as we believe, universal, then every genuine expression of human religious thought will enable us to see in the Gospel some corresponding truth which answers to it." Yet Westcott's Christian universality is not triumphalist, for he views those early religions as having something to add to Christianity: "If we can understand what whole races of men were feeling after, we shall have a clue to the discovery of mysteries for which we, with our limited religious

[39] "Ancestral Worship," 604. Emphasis mine.

instincts, should not otherwise have sought. And in the growing assurance that the Gospel meets each real need of humanity, we shall find the highest conceivable proof of its final and absolute truth." Part of this project to find the truths reflected in the religions of "pre-Christian" societies involved the assumption that non-Christian religions had experienced a degeneration away from their original motivating desires to connect man, God, and the world, a shift fueled by over-emphasis on speculation or ceremonialism.[40]

In 1925, James Addison summarized the recent history of the ancestor worship question and looked ahead. "For the time being," he wrote,

> the wisest policy for Western leaders of the Christian church in China is to continue the scientific and sympathetic study of ancestor-worship as the most important religious phenomenon in the life of the people. Such study will enable the church, as past experience has already proved, to fulfil the pressing duty of making ever more adequate and intelligent provision for the Christian expression of those motives and desires which for thousands of years have found their fulfilment in the ancestral rites. In such a gradual process, wisely guided, the Chinese church will find enrichment, and attain a growing capacity to win and hold the people of China.[41]

Addison echoes Cornaby's instrumental fulfillment and also hints at an expansive Christianity that, as Westcott described, could engage in processes of religious enlightenment by asking the questions others asked that Christians did not think to ask.

Perhaps naturally, many early voices crying that there was divinity to be found in Chinese culture were Chinese. One such was Zhu Youyu (Y.Y. Tsu) (1885-1986). The son of Christians, Zhu earned a PhD from Columbia University in 1912.[42] Later, he

[40] Westcott, *The Gospel of Life*, 121-2.
[41] Addison, "Ancestor-Worship and Protestant Christianity," 148.
[42] "Zhu Youyu (Y.Y. Tsu), 1885-1986," *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity Online*. www.bdcconline.net/en/stories/z/zhu-youyu.php.

would serve on the executive committee of the NCC.[43] Zhu rhapsodized: "Let us remember that hidden under the crust of paganism there is a treasure-house full of rich, genuine, pristine, religious virtues and emotions which, like the finest Shansi anthracite, have been accumulating throughout the centuries, waiting for the ignition of higher religious insight and faith to burst forth into flames of glorification for God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ."[44] For Zhu, the religious treasures to be found in Chinese traditions were hidden underneath their paganism; they needed to be unearthed and examined in the light of Christianity.

Others felt this was too liberal a stance, but some went even beyond Zhu's enthusiastic embracing of the Christian truths in embryo already extant in Chinese religion, finding such inspiration in it that they felt Chinese religions might already be equal to or even superior to Christian doctrines.[45] Some as individuals found their own faith changed by what they encountered in Chinese culture and philosophy, changed in a way that gave them a new past, a past in which God had been an active element, and a new future, in which Christianity was transformed – made godlier yet – by the revelations found in other traditions.

In *The Conversion of Missionaries*, Lian Xi describes three Western missionaries' personal and faith transitions as they awoke to reverence for Chinese culture and religions. Lian Xi writes evocatively: "Some missionaries, sent by the home boards to carry the Christian Light to China, found competing lights in the Middle Kingdom,

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[43] *National Christian Council of China Biennial Report 1937-1946* (Shanghai: NCC of China, 1946), 2. SMA, U123-0-21.
[44] Tsu, Y. Y. (Zhu Youyu), "The Chinese Idea of Worship (Zhongguo jisi zhi yiyi)," 625.
[45] Sowerby, "Our Attitude Towards Chinese Religions," 297, 299.

emitted from its Confucian classics, its Buddhist or Taoist temples, or perhaps through the papered windows of a peasant's clay house, where a family gathered around the candle-lit supper table. Occasionally they became distracted by these lights and began to wonder whether they should, or had the right to, alter Chinese life." Lian Xi argues that these people experienced a distraction from their missionary work, or perhaps even an unmaking of their identities as Christians.[46] He admits that for many, the vision of their own mission was transformed, not destroyed, yet throughout his somewhat ambivalent work, he echoes the interpretation of fundamentalists in his study by referring to missionaries' reverence for principles taught in Chinese culture as a "distraction," and by describing their personal transformations as "cutting the nerve" of missions.[47] Lian Xi clearly respects the perspective of the missionaries in his study; he does not seem to grieve destruction that he sees liberal thought wreaking on the deeply flawed missionary enterprise. Still, *The Conversion of Missionaries* could leave a reader with the impression that missionaries who found themselves changed by China ended up dying out or leaving the mission field; that the story of liberal missionaries in the 1920s and 1930s is the story of an ending.

Certainly others have written of the missionary movement as failed or as moribund by the late 1930s, a notion implied in Lian's second book, *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China*.[48] Lian identifies "Chinese Christianity" as unsupported by Western funds and unconstrained by the

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[46] Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries*, xii, 10.
[47] See Ibid., 52, 55, 69, 114 for discussion of transformed faith/vision. For language of distraction, cut nerves, and denaturing of missions, see for example pages 10, 30.
[48] Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire*, 8.

denominationalism that plagued Western churches.[49] While his book provides a wonderful examination of many branches of Christianity that were built up in doctrinal and communal diversity under the leadership of Chinese Christians and apart from the shaping influence of mission boards, his definition leaves the Chinese members and leaders in mission-linked churches in a historical no-man's-land, not truly "Chinese" and clearly subject to the agency of the missionaries more than agents unto themselves. But this dissertation has shown that many Chinese Christians were thoughtful, active agents and leaders in some mission-linked organizations. They helped shape discussions and efforts there, and had an important impact on their missionary leaders and colleagues.

Within the liberal community surrounding the NCC, there were many missionaries like those Lian Xi described – Hume, Rawlinson, and Buck – who found their worldview and their faith changed by their experience. One such was Bitton, who in 1910 described the attitude a new missionary was likely to have when leaving his homeland. Having been surrounded by mostly Christian people always, and often taught explicitly of that religion's unimpeachable superiority, missionaries would encounter the opinion that Chinese people are "not exactly human with human souls. This point of view is in evidence among many whom we meet in the home land. Later, as we journey to our fields of labour, it is strenuously forced upon us by our fellow-passengers on the great ocean steamers, and when we have arrived at our destinations we find large communities of men and women … to whom the question has ceased to be one that admits of any

[49] Ibid., Chapter 1 passim.

doubt whatever." But Bitton described the process by which a new missionary might gradually learn a different lesson:

> The first awakening soon comes. Some older missionary lets fall a remark with regard to some form of Chinese life that it is superior to the same thing at home. Our suspicions are aroused. Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? But shock follows shock until we become accustomed to the idea… Indeed we one day find ourselves coming to similar thought about certain customs without help from others. Again and again we have this experience until finally all our thinking powers are aroused and our minds are turned to the solution of this new problem. We ask how these things that seem so purely the product of Christian teaching have come to be part and parcel of the life of a people to whom Christianity is as yet practically unknown. … Our minds thus are opened to the whole question of what Christianity owes to the many religions, or rather to the many customs which are the outcome of the religions with which it has been in contact.[50]

Bitton's last sentence acknowledges the spiritual learning gained for Christianity through cultural intermixing. It is a simple recognition of the history of Christianity's relationship with its host cultures, a confession which many, fearing doctrinal compromise, were loath to make.

Norwegian theologian Notto Thelle adds further examples of Westerners who experienced a conversion of sorts, noting in particular one Western missionary, Karl Ludvig Reichelt, who established a strong dialogue with Buddhist communities and wrote scholarly works on Buddhism for a Western audience.[51] I argue that the syncretists and negotiators among missionaries and Chinese alike represent a theological flexibility that many felt enhanced their ability to understand and follow the teachings of Jesus. Thelle wrote the following about young Christian leaders returning from abroad. Some of

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[50] Bitton, "Some Chinese Feasts," 270-71.
[51] Thelle, Notto, "Changed by the East," 115, 120.

our writers may have been among the very group he describes: "Nurtured by Western ideas of democracy and modernization, they wanted to 'de-Westernize' Christianity in order to make it indigenous, and several of them dreamed of synthesizing Christianity and Chinese culture."[52] In Thelle's words we find the notion that religious synthesis was a step beyond indigenization, and was desired by some missionaries.

Some missionaries who developed a more liberal perspective toward ancestor worship mourned the failure of others to recognize the divinity already extant in the Chinese belief system. In 1933, A.J. Brace wrote, as the conclusion to his article, "Christianizing Ancestor Reverence," the following:

> To some of these old scholars we have met Jesus would say, "Thou art not far from the Kingdom of Heaven." An old Lama priest at Kong Kong Jei in the Tibetan Borderland, told us the story of the musk deer running for days with the smell of the musk in its nostrils. It was seeking the musk, and ran till exhausted, then lay down to die. In self-commiseration licking itself it discovered the musk in its own body—but too late. Truly, "The Kingdom of God is within you."

Brace seems to say that missionaries who seek a godliness apart from the Chinese culture are, like the musk ox, wasting their effort and missing the mark.

The stories of missionaries like Bitton, Reichelt, and Brace support Lian Xi's statement that the individuals he studied were part of a much broader trend. But modernizing influences did not affect members only of the missionary demographic. In Wei Zhuomin (Francis Wei) we find one example of a Chinese Christian whose thinking experienced a similar shift to that of many of his liberalizing missionary contemporaries. In Chapter two of this dissertation, I discussed Wei's 1911 essay in which he affirmed the

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[52] Ibid., 118.

importance of comparative religion models that lined the world's religions up in an evolutionary hierarchy of which Christian theology was the apex. By 1947, when his book *The Spirit of Chinese Culture*, was published, Wei's perspectives had developed with his changing times, and he was responding positively to and himself producing liberal thought on the relationship between Christianity and Chinese culture. His feelings about comparative religion certainly changed in the ensuing decades. In 1947, Wei wrote, "Nor would we recommend the comparative method. Comparison takes cultural elements out of their context and misrepresents them. Cultural elements are like features of the human face. When any facial feature is singled out it may easily become a caricature…" No, now Wei urged English-reading Christians to view "The Chinese religious and moral tradition… as a *praeparatio evangelica*, to use Eusebius' expression."[53] In invoking the words of Eusebius, Wei is clearly not evoking his meaning as generally understood in his work by that name.[54] Instead, he refers to the meaning reputed to have been understood by even "early Christians," which is that "traditional religions should be seen as a *preparation evangelica*, a preparation for the gospel."[55] Where in 1911, Wei had brought his expertise on the Chinese classics to a primarily missionary conversation, in 1947, Wei

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[53] Francis C. M. Wei, *The Spirit of Chinese Culture* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), 3-4, 157.
[54] Eusebius's *Preparatio Evangelica* tries to prove the superiority of Judaism and Christianity over Hellenic thought. "Eusebius of Caesarea," in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity,* ed. Everett Ferguson (NY: Garland Publishing, 1990), 326.
[55] Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 122. Anthony E. Clark points out that Matteo Ricci had found the Western theological basis for God speaking to "pagan nations" in Justin Martyr and the Book of Acts. See "Introduction: a Voluntary Exile: Crisis, Conflict, and Accommodation After Matteo Ricci," in Anthony E. Clark, ed., *Voluntary Exile: Chinese Christianity and Cultural Confluence since 1552.* Cranbury, JN: Lehigh University Press, 2013, 5-6.

brought words reeking of Western antiquity to bear on Chinese Christianity, modeling precisely what he urged his readers to enact: a meeting of cultures in the pursuit of truth.

Wei also invoked the Western writers of his day, discussing Troeltsch, Kraemer, and Barth to compare their views of Christianity's applicability to cultures worldwide. Wei presented Troeltsch's view that Christianity's claim to total validity "'does not preclude the possibility that other racial groups, living under entirely different cultural conditions, may experience their contact with the Divine Life in quite a different way … And they may quite sincerely regard this as absolutely valid for them.'" He contrasted Troeltsch to Kraemer, who found "'no point of contact'" connecting "'Christianity and the other religions.'" Wei explains that "For Kraemer Christ fulfils these religions [i.e. the non-Christian religions] by contradicting them. …Yet, Dr. Kraemer also maintains that we should not deny that God has been working in the minds of men outside the sphere of the Christian revelation…" Wei speculates that Kraemer's strident condemnation of non-Christian religions is made out of fear "that in seeing too much in these religions there may be the danger of diluting our enthusiasm for Christian propaganda," but he himself finds the most satisfying answer in an expansive reading of another of Kraemer's statements: "'no man, and certainly no Christian, can claim the power or the right to limit God's revelatory working.' God has revealed Himself also in religions and philosophies outside of Judaism and Christianity."[56] Wei's progressive thinking is clearly a result of both his deep familiarity with Chinese religions and their

[56] Francis Wei, *The Spirit of Chinese Culture,* 3-8. Cf. Hughes, E.R. "The Religious Experiment of Hsiao (Filial Piety)," 2.

texts as well as his spiritual journey in Christianity, including intensive reading of theological texts from authors of varying alignments.

Thinkers like Wei Zhuomin did not see the shifts in belief they experienced as denaturing their missionary zeal, but as productively, positively transforming their approach to the work of being Christian. Wei invokes one of Lian Xi's converted missionaries, Frank Rawlinson, using his words to express the falseness of the notion of a "'Christian' West." Wei explains,

> It is, however, not because the West is already Christian that Christian missionaries go from the Western countries to China; it is because these missionaries realize that the Chinese need Christianity as much as the people in the West that they are compelled to go. It has to be carefully pointed out to the Chinese that unless more Chinese and more people of all the other nations in the world accept Christianity and demonstrate to one another how to give a fuller expression to their common Christian faith, Christianity in no nation in the world can find a full expression.[57]

Francis Wei was heard when he wrote to the *Chinese Recorder* in 1911 and later; and he also heard his contemporaries as they developed together a vision for a world Christianity that happened to have come to Asia from the West, but was not Western-centric. Of men like Wei, one missionary wrote: "On the other hand the Chinese Christian leaders follow very much the same development as the western thought, or more truly, world thought. This may be due to the predominance of the missionary in the Chinese Church in the past. But the acceptability of the advanced Christian thinking of each age speaks well for the possibility of stimulating universal values."[58]

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[57] Francis Wei, *The Spirit of Chinese Culture,* 159-60.
[58] Smythe, "The Changing Missionary Message," 164.

The NCC and its broader liberal Protestant community were co-constituting, to greater and lesser degrees depending on individual thought processes and experiences; they sought a new common vision for what Christianity could be. The quest for an indigenized Christianity was on the minds of many, but in becoming open to that notion, previous formulations of Western Christianity and its place in the world and in God's plan had to fall. Fulfillment theory allowed a reconciliation between contradictory historical frameworks that governed Christian discussions of truth. It brought together notions of evolution with notions that a sacred past existed and that humanity had degenerated since. The fulfillment theory allowed for a multiplicity of sacred pasts and for the possibility of continual revelation, a combination that could mean the continual growth – even evolution – of the Christian community. In affirming Confucian teachings and Christian practices, Chinese writers broached, again and again, the idea of sacred Chinese pasts and Christianity as itself a work in progress, adopting and adaptive to these pasts rather than sitting at the pinnacle of religious evolution, the endpoint of a historical trajectory, or the model of modern religion.

Filial Piety: Something We Can All Agree On

Chinese Christians were heavily involved in discussions about ancestor worship and filial piety. Compared to the knottier issues that prevented a smooth adoption of ancestor worship, filial piety was a safe common ground between Chinese culture and Christianity. These concessions came just as anti-Confucian radicalism was swelling in China. As discussed in chapter two and in Susan Glosser's work, I believe that this seeming contradiction provides a corrective to historical studies that overemphasize the

reach and impact of May Fourth iconoclasm. Still, among the Chinese Christian publishing community, we must remember that diverse viewpoints on the family were held and communicated. We must remember that those who were seeking common ground with Western Christianity were just a subset of a larger Christian reading and writing community.

A 1927 YWCA book entitled *Jiating wenti taolun yice* (home problems) included a chapter called "Wuhou de wenti" (The problem of having no male offspring), which matches Wu Yu's article in its vehement rejection of the central ideals of the Confucian family order. The author, Xu Yiqing, takes responsibility to society as the ruling principle of her work, where Wu Yu emphasized the strength of the nation as the top priority. Xu Yiqing carefully and thoroughly cuts down the rationale behind prizing male heirs and indeed, behind feeling an obligation to provide heirs at all, listing among "sins committed in order to have an heir" such social problems as creation of excess population, early marriage, concubinage, disputes over inheritance, "wife renting" and abandonment of temporary wives once offspring has been produced.[59] In contrast to Xu's social action-oriented YWCA article, Wu Jinding's article published in the YMCA's Journal *Qingnian Jinbu* (Youth Progress) in 1924 unabashedly favored Confucian ethics; it was positioned in the "National Studies" section of the magazine, and touted filial piety as the crowning virtue of Chinese ethics.[60]

I present these different examples to illustrate the variety of approaches to filial piety that are represented in Chinese Christian publications, and the many different

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[59] Xu Yiqing, "Wuhou de wenti" [The problem of having no [male] offspring], 151-7.
[60] Wu Jinding. "Zhongguo xiaodao yaoyi" [Key points about China's way of filial piety], 48-54.

motives for invoking it. It is important that we keep in mind the heterogeneity represented in this rich set of conversations. In particular, our sources do not allow us to estimate the number of missionaries on any given side of a debate; the *Chinese Recorder* required that Frank Rawlinson, for one, rein in some of his liberal views so as to present a neutral, or at least balanced, set of views.[61] Therefore while the *Chinese Recorder* articles examined in this chapter and the last can give us a good sense of the range of perspectives on ancestor worship and filial piety, none of the articles can tell us how popular any of those perspectives were. Still, the frequency with which the concept of fulfillment theory emerges among those along the spectrum of opinions tells us that it was well-accepted.

Given that level of acceptance, I was surprised to note that periodically, articles or letters to the editor would express dismay at the "revelation" that many were advocating incorporating ancestral veneration into Christianity. How could these writers be ignorant of previous works on the subject, I wondered? How could they have missed the landmark, very thorough writings on the matter of ancestor worship that had been published in the past? The question almost answers itself; the ease with which a twenty-first century scholar opens up articles from different years belies the passage of time between their printing. Naturally, even with considerable interest or passion for a topic, several requirements would have to be met for one to be well-read in all the previous literature on it, from having a repository of back issues, to being able to access them, to having the leisure time to hunt through for relevant writings. Any one of these factors

[61] Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries,* 145.

being inconvenient in any number of ways might have kept writers in the early twentieth century from full knowledge of the conversation in which they were participating. Similarly, how long one had been a Christian, or had lived in China, or the habits and attitudes of one's immediate religious community might limit one's exposure to voices in a long-term debate.

The difficulty in keeping abreast of even a contemporary debate can be seen in the experience of one T.C. Woo. Woo wrote about his own experience encountering different Christian views on ancestor worship. After his baptism in 1913, Woo continued to periodically make offerings to his ancestors, seeing no conflict between that practice and his Christian beliefs. He had multiple arguments with missionaries on the matter, however, and finally sent a survey out to different missionaries.[62] Finding their responses to indicate respect for his reasoning, but hesitancy based on fear that Christians might violate the commandment to worship only God, he continued to perform his own ancestral veneration and encouraged other Christians to do the same. In 1925, Woo reported, "The churches are not astonished, and in fact, the churches in recent years are encouraging their members to make offerings to their ancestorial [sic] graves around the Tsing-Ming festival. Such practices then travelled to the other Christian communities and found a ready welcome." This positive response "naturally pleased me," wrote Woo, "and I began to think that the churches had moved and that a difficult question had been peacefully solved, until a communication from my friend, Mr. Z.I. Chang, altered my already drawn conclusion. He said that those who are preaching Christianity today are

[62] Woo seems to have been a member of the Shenggong hui, or Anglican Church; he says that the missionaries' responses were published in the Peking Sheng-Kung-Hui's Peace Magazine.

preaching a foreign religion… All those who are converted, are going rapidly to degeneration." His friend indicated to Woo that ceasing ancestor worship was one symptom of the degeneration of foreign-style Christians, and Woo read his comment to mean that "the question of ancestor worship is still the main issue in anti-Christian movements. I hope to correct these misunderstandings by my present article…"[63] Understandably, for Woo, it was difficult to get a bead on a situation that could vary within and across churches, mission boards, and geographical regions. What Paul Cohen says of the missionary enterprise can be all the more readily applied to the whole of Chinese Christianity: there was so much variation in the Christian church "that to think of it in the singular can serve only to obscure its true nature."[64]

Differences in approach do not merely reflect the personal stances of authors; we must also consider the intended readerships that influenced what was published where and with what purpose. The *Chinese Recorder*, which has provided us copious food for thought about both Western and Chinese views on ancestor worship, was intended primarily for Western church leaders, and those Chinese who could read it in English were among the most educated elite. The issues addressed in *The Chinese Recorder* were often issues that pertained to church leadership. *Qingnian jinbu* and the YWCA's *Home Problems* books, on the other hand, would have been broadly accessible to and aimed at a more general Chinese readership, a readership that was engaged in weighing a number of competing value systems and epistemologies. Among the Chinese voices represented on

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[63] T.C. Woo, "A Chinese Christian on Ancestor Worship," reprinted in translation from *Zhenli* magazine. *West China Missionary News* (December 1925), 31-2.
[64] Cohen, "Christian Missions and Their Impact to 1900," 544.

those pages are many that, like Xu Yiqing, tend to side with the New Culture appraisals of filial piety as a dangerous and damaging construct.

Yet some saw nationalism as conflicting with the New Culture rejection of filial piety. Some writers, angered by Western imperialism, criticized the negative impact of Western thought on the practice of filial piety in China. C.C. Nieh, whose article we addressed in chapter 2, offered strong-worded advice to Christian leaders: "I am therefore, of the opinion that if we are to prevent Christianity from being completely stamped out, we must first of all arouse the preachers. They must in all places and at all times respect our own national customs, taking the strong points to support themselves." His derision and anger were placed in tenuously loyal terms; in urging the adoption of Chinese practices and beliefs, he was, he claimed, participating in what I call benevolent essentialism: seeking to boil down Christianity in order to save it.

Nieh hoped to reach more than just the Western leaders of Christianity. He claimed that the enlightened of his own people were so disgusted with Christianity that they did not engage with it deeply enough to provide detailed criticism, "thus leaving its believers unable to locate where mistakes are and how to find out a way to what is good." Nieh wrote his article to remedy this situation.[65] One of Nieh's major contentions was that Christians exert inappropriate power, cowing Chinese converts into relinquishing Confucian practices and beliefs. Nieh, like Fan Zimei, did not hide his respect for and reliance on Confucian ethical frameworks.[66] He claimed that Christians were "ignorant of the methods by which to seek virtue and to be virtuous," methods laid out in the Chinese

[65] Nieh, C.C., [Untitled], 1-2.
[66] Fan Zimei [Bihui, pseud.], "Zhongguo jisi zuzong de wojian," 17.

classic *Zhongyong*, and “therefore they wrangle about mere formalities but neglect the root of principles.” This was one factor that prevented the wider spread of Christianity in China, according to Nieh.[67] His criticism of Protestant missionaries for being too obsessed with matters of formality aligns with Addison’s and provides an interesting counterpoint to the contention of the more conservative missionaries, who claimed that they avoided ancestor worship in order to escape the obsession with formalities that had brought darkness upon the Roman church.

Nieh aimed barbed arrows at Western people for failing to treat their parents with filial piety. In so doing, he conflated Western Christianity with Western culture; he considered the former to be a major foundation of the latter. Nieh asserted that Christians tried to hold down or hold back their own parents to show that Heavenly Father was placed first in their lives. In a statement clearly calculated to offend the moral sensibilities of his readers, Nieh wrote that Western parents work hard to bring up children who, when grown, “only expect to receive twice inheritance and acknowledge no responsibility whatever of supporting and nourishing their parents.” By way of evidence, Nieh cites two wealthy Christian families in which aged parents did menial work to survive, one acting as a servant, another the gate-keeper of the university of which his son was president.[68] Nieh finds the source of Western sin in the New Testament verse from Matthew 10:37, in which Jesus says, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.” Nieh’s concern about the impact of Matthew 10:37 was not unfounded. In a meeting of the Home Committee at the NCC’s National

[67] Nieh, C.C., [Untitled], 1, 8.
[68] Nieh, C.C., [Untitled], 9-11.

Conference, a Chinese leader named Mu Zuolin referenced this verse to argue that the Committee might be going too far in focusing on family, since Jesus had made it clear that Christian work ought to be centered in the church. Mu brought up this verse in response to You Shuxun's speech on the central importance of family as the place where good church members and good citizens are raised.[69]

Nieh's very vision of public morality, which he stated in his article's conclusion, centered on filial piety as emblematic of larger social problems.

> Recently, heresies, such as revolutions in family life, the loss of filial piety, etc. have been springing up by leaps and bounds. I am really afraid of their evil consequences. Though they have nothing to do with Christianity, yet its errors such as those I have mentioned above—Christ's manner toward his mother…, to-gether with the teaching that one should respect and honor God more than his parents have a great deal to do with confusing people's minds, and at the same time they give a handle to its opponents for attacking.

Western and Christian failures to exhibit filial piety toward their parents exhibited, for Nieh, the errors in Christian thinking, errors which had pulled Christianity away from morality into dogmatism. "The root is wrong," he wrote, "and so countless evils are the result."[70] In spite of his avowed respect for Christianity, Nieh's article, with its tone of challenge, pits Confucianism against Western culture.[71]

One Westerner came forward to champion Christian filiality in a written response to Nieh's article. Henry W. Farnam, emeritus professor of economics at Yale University, engaged with Nieh's arguments in a manner that, like Nieh's article, bespoke a clash of

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[69] *ZQJX di'er jie nianhui baogao,* 147. Evidently, Mu came around to the family's importance; in 1933, he was one of the Home Committee's corresponding secretaries. *ZQJX dijiu jie dahui baogao,* 45.
[70] Nieh, C.C., [Untitled], 5, 11, 19.
[71] As such, it participated in a trend Lian Xi observes in the early 1920s anti-Christian movement of describing the relationship between Christianity and China as a clash of civilizations. *The Conversion of Missionaries*, 49-50.

civilizations perspective. He pointed out that "if all religions were to be judged by the lives of the nations and the individuals who profess them, I fear that no one of them could stand unscathed," then proceeded to point out all the ills of Chinese society, listing as representative examples the existence of slave girls, concubinage, illiteracy, and the prevalence of opium smoking. In response to Nieh's criticism of Christian dogmatism, Farnam responded that, as evidenced by the many different churches that had been started by virtue of doctrinal disagreements, one could clearly be Christian without accepting all doctrines. But all Christians, he argued, if they really follow their principles, "will exhibit the same kind of a life." This life would be characterized by adherence to such commandments as "Honor thy Father and they Mother," a commandment that Jesus did not lightly cast aside; "he was not preaching an easy indifference to parents but demanding the sacrifice even of family life for the sake of the salvation of the World," Farnam explained. "There is much that we must all admire in the strong family bond of the Chinese and its spirit of reverence, but the Christian doctrine that we must go beyond the family and consider others as well, represents to my mind an advance, because it is more comprehensive, and because it requires a spirit of more intense devotion and sacrifice."[72]

By touting the universal love required of Christians as a nobler principle than filial piety, Farnam responded to Nieh in a similar vein to some other Western critics of Chinese beliefs. They described God as the supreme ancestor. In 1907 Jackson invoked the genealogy of Jesus from the New Testament book of Luke, which traces his lineage a

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[72] Henry W. Farnam, letter to C.C. Nieh, Jan. 2, 1925, 1-2, 4-6. SMA Q579-4-144.

man at a time all the way back to "'the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God." Jackson wrote that the knowledge that God is the ultimate and primordial ancestor is "almost, but not quite forgotten. There are still traces of this primitive truth in the Imperial worship of the great Ancestor by the Son of Heaven. In the worship of Him, the Father of all, the Chinese instinct can alone find its complete satisfaction."[73] Frank Rawlinson also invoked the concept of the fatherhood of God as one of potentially great resonance for the Chinese; he claimed in 1921 that the Chinese lacked the understanding that "union with God is the only way to make human relationships work." Rawlinson hoped to help the Chinese understand the atonement of Christ, which he saw as the culmination of Christ's revelation of the nature of God. Responding to the idea that the Chinese might understand Christ's Atonement for mankind's sins best if they saw it as God the Father's union with mankind, Rawlinson reasoned, "But we must not forget that the Chinese concept 'father' is inadequate to convey the Christian idea! It must be enlarged."[74]

Where Farnam saw filial piety as holding the Chinese back from Christian universal love, and Rawlinson's 1921 article expressed fear that the Chinese conception of father might limit their understanding of God's nature, others, like Nieh, emphasized what the Chinese concept of filial piety could bring to Christianity. Ying Yuandao, in the article "Jidujiao yu jiating wenti" (Christianity and Family Problems), argues that Jesus taught principles about family in order to prepare people for the Kingdom of God: "Jesus

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[73] Jackson, "Ancestral Worship," 246.
[74] Rawlinson, Frank. "The Approach to the Christian Message to China," *Chinese Recorder* 52.8 (August 1921), 527.

saw family unity as sacred because he thought that humanity's important relationships were born from this unity, like the husband and wife relationship, the parent and child relationship, and the older brother and younger brother relationship, all are within this scope." The three sets of relationships Ying describes as central human relationships are three of the five Confucian relationships. Ying does not mention the other two, the relationships between ruler and minister or subject and between friend and friend. Confucian perspectives on family relationships certainly inform Ying's understanding of Jesus's view of family, which is here seen as sacred metaphor and training ground for the Kingdom of Heaven, rather than hierarchical structure ordering society per se.[75]

Susan Glosser notes that New Culture intellectuals rejected the ideal of a Confucian patriarchal order, but retained the idea that social order relied on what happened within the family: "They no longer believed the traditional joint family capable of ordering society, but still assumed that societal order began with the family."[76] Ying Yuandao's approach was similar, but he went a step farther than his New Culture contemporaries, implicitly pushing against the traditional large family form and explicitly sidestepping existing secular reformist conversations about the family in favor of a focus on religious teachings. Yet his framing concepts matched New Culture thought, both in taking an evolutionary approach to society and in retaining the idea that family was central in the creation of social order. In his analysis, Jesus, more than anyone else, could propel the evolution of human society. Like the New Culture intellectuals' iconoclasm, Ying's alternate thinking still did not carry the analysis outside the bounds of the concept

[75] Ying Yuandao, "Jidujiao yu jiating wenti" [Christianity and family problems], 20.
[76] Glosser, *Chinese Visions of Family and State*, 10.

that family is a microcosm, training ground, and moral center for the greater society, but Ying applied that notion to the Kingdom of God, a future state, rather than mere human or political society.[77]

Ying Yuandao's article presents a nuanced answer to the complaint that Farnam would make a year later. Farnam argued that Chinese culture reinforced caring for one's own, failing to instill a broader sense of responsibility to care for those outside one's circle, an argument that seems to have been fairly commonplace among apologists for Christianity.[78] Ying found, though, that Jesus's teachings reinforced the sanctity of familial relationships celebrated in Chinese culture, expanding their meaning. "Jesus said he was the son of the Eternal Father, and his mission was to show Heavenly Father's love, inspiring the people's reverence; even more, he wanted to establish a father-son relationship between God and men. Therefore, the relationship between people is of the highest type, like between older and younger brothers. This really is a most extensive 'brotherhood.'"[79] While some, perhaps Farnam himself, would find in this statement evidence that Christianity was having an elevating influence on the thought of its Chinese adherents, others might well note that Ying's understanding of the sanctity of family relationships was something he brought to the table from his cultural background.

The idea that filiality-focused Chinese culture could infuse and enliven Christianity is expressed in an article written seven years after Ying's, in 1930, by a

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[77] Ying Yuandao, "Jidujiao yu jiating wenti" [Christianity and family problems], 7, 8.
[78] Henry W. Farnam to C.C. Nieh, 4-5. SMA. In his 1907 report on Ancestral Worship, Jackson had similarly stated, "The Chinese idea of a physical continuity and kinship which links the generations each to each is a helpful thought and has done much to preserve the continuity of family life, but it needs to be spiritualized and transfigured by the far more lofty conception of universal kinship through relation to him in whom 'every family in heaven and earth is named.'" Jackson, "Ancestral Worship," 236.
[79] Ying Yuandao, "Jidujiao yu jiating wenti" [Christianity and family problems], 20.

scholar-missionary named E.R. Hughes. Intimating the utility of culture as a lens through which to view doctrinal truths, Hughes wrote of shifts in the winds of Protestant understanding. He found that a dawning understanding of the importance of individual obedience tempered the "colossal faith in liberty and democracy which so characterized the thinking of the 19th century and which Protestant Christianity embraced with such ardour as sometimes to construe Christianity in terms of individual liberty alone." Hughes describes Christ's obedience as filial. While one must not err by treating one's parents as deity, "the self-abnegation of glad, filial service *is* the secret of life's fulfilment and of the new creation of personality." Hughes foresaw Christians being enriched by the (yet to be fully actualized) principles of truth found in Chinese metaphysics and morals, once those truths were fully actualized. "When that comes," he muses, "may we not expect that Christianity, hitherto so predominantly actualized in the West, and subject [by virtue of its combination with Greek, Roman, and "Asiatic mystery religion" thought] to special emphases on God as King and Providence and on Christ as the Eternal Logos or the Propitiatory Sacrifice, will come more deeply to understand the 'Miracle of His Sonship'?"[80] Chinese principles of filial piety, in Hughes' view, were more than just consonant with Christian teachings; filial piety had important instructional roles to play in enriching Christian faith and understanding of the divine.

While Hughes saw filial piety as a nascent truth that could, if actualized, have a role to play in Christianity, Zhu Jingyi saw it as the core principle of Jesus Christ's

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[80] Hughes, "The Religious Experiment of Hsiao," 28, 30. Compare with similar visions of the enriching power of Chinese teachings for Christianity held by Hume and Rawlinson. Lian Xi, *The Conversion of Missionaries*, 48-9, 54-5, 78-9, 82.

teachings, and as a core teaching of the pre-Christian covenant people. In this, Zhu's article essentializes Christianity in a new way, responding to calls for a new creative Chinese spirit of Christianity. Chinese theologian Zhao Zichen (1888-1979) made such a call when he wrote, "What is lacking in the church's publication today is not the tools to manufacture writing; it is writings that have life, answers that spring from the deepest recesses of the Chinese heart, and more, answers that have grown up from the inheritance transmitted in the blood of the Chinese people, living materials sufficient to pluck the heartstrings of the reader."[81]

Calls for what is often termed the "indigenization" of the Chinese church in many ways match processes referred to elsewhere as "de-colonisation." Scholar of missionary hermeneutics and third world theology R.S. Sugirtharajah wrote of three Brahmins who "freed themselves from the hegemonic images of Jesus propagated by missionaries during the days of the Empire," referring to their new Christology as decolonizing. By claiming Jesus as "an Asiatic," one of these three men, Keshub Chunder Sen, strikes back against hegemonic discourses that painted Indians as "heathens" and thereby delegitimized their voices. Sen wrote, "It is not the Christ of the Baptists, nor the Christ of the Methodists, but the Christ sent by God, the Christ of love and meekness, of truth and self-sacrifice, whom the world delights to honour. If you say we must renounce our nationality, and all the purity and devotion of Eastern faith, for sectarian and western Christianity, we shall say most emphatically, No. It is *our* Christ, *Asia's* Christ, you have

[81] Quoted in Xu Zuhuan, "Zhongguo wenhua yu Jidujiao de guanxi" [The Relationship Between Chinese Culture and Christianity], *Qingnian jinbu* 80 (Feb. 1925), 1. SMA, U120-0-143-554. Translation mine.

come to return to us. The East gratefully and lovingly welcomes back her Christ."[82] Zhu Jingyi and his contemporaries do not seem so attuned to an Asian regional identity; that term was brought to bear by Sen in part to stress the racial and linguistic ties between India and the Middle Eastern home of Jesus. Zhu's alternative Christology is Chinese or East Asian, built around the core of Confucian ethics, but like Sen's, it can be seen as a decolonizing theology.

Zhu basically reimagined Christ's role around the central moral and ethical importance of filial piety. He saw problems in ancient Israel and its surrounding societies as stemming from their failure to properly live this single principle. Citing the two occurrences of the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament, Zhu described the commandment to "Honour thy father and thy mother" as one rule that was shared with several contemporary societies. Some of these societies, Zhu says, implemented that law to truly terrifying extremes, like the Pheonicians burning their living children in expiation of the parents' sins. Old Testament filial piety, while leaving something to be desired (an assertion supported by verses noting use of the death penalty in cases of unfiliality), was better than the practices of their non-Hebrew contemporaries.[83] The leaders of the Jews subsequently came to overemphasize filial behavior, neglecting a true spirit of filiality. It was against these traditions of empty external shows of filiality that Jesus reacted when he said, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" and

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[82] R.S. Sugirtharajah, "The Magi from Bengal and their Jesus: Indian Construals of Christ during Colonial Times," in Werner Ustorf and Toshiko Murayama, eds., *Identity and Marginality: Rethinking Christianity in North East Asia* (Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang, 2000), 15, 18, 21.
[83] Zhu Jingyi, "Jidujiao de xiaodao guan," 24-5.

criticized loopholes in the law that exempted people from the duty to care for their parents.[84] Rigid, performative tradition had obscured truth like a cloud blocking the sun.

According to Zhu, Jesus was "the truth,… the way," illuminating what had previously been obscured—including correct principles of filial piety. "When he came," Zhu wrote, "all the darkness in society fled away; the last remaining light had to be brought back to brightness, and the truth that had been hidden had to find rebirth."[85] Where even such sympathetic Western Christians as Hughes would likely consider filial piety to be just one truth among many that Jesus revealed, Zhu never acknowledges such a pluralism of principles; he foregrounds filial piety as Christ's central ethical teaching. In so doing, Zhu addresses the New Testament verse that C.C. Nieh and Mu Zuolin each addressed. But where Nieh and Mu had read "he that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" as evidence that family was secondary in importance to other modes of following Jesus, Zhu Jingyi interpreted that scripture in another way. Zhu explained that Jesus's intent was to invite people to follow and respond to truth. By so doing, they could develop a truly spiritual heart, inspired by true filiality. In support of this assertion, Zhu explains, "Christ used Old Testament teachings about filial piety a lot. He really did want to fulfill the law, not take it lightly." In fact, Zhu claims, even in the snippets of Christ's life left to us in the New Testament, "we can see his own filiality to his parents." As a twelve-year-old child, Jesus was "subject to" Mary and Joseph, as an adult he changed water to wine at his mother's request, and as a dying man he entrusted

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[84] Zhu cites Matt. 15:3, 5-6.
[85] Zhu Jingyi, "Jidujiao de xiaodao guan," 25.

the care of his mother to his most beloved disciple, Mary's other, unbelieving, children perhaps being insufficiently filial to take up the task of her care.[86]

Having addressed the situation of Christian filial piety in Old Testament times and during Jesus's own life, Zhu turned next to the early Christian period, after Jesus's death. Here he, like Hughes, acknowledged the important role that cultural syncretism with Greek culture had played in establishing Christian traditions.[87] Zhu referenced Buddhism as a ready reminder of the natural fact that religion both changes and is changed by its environment. He asserted that filial piety did not take sufficient hold as a Christian principle in the early church because the cradle of Christianity was the West, which "since ancient times has emphasized a national mindset and not a clan mindset." Even more than in China, where the saying goes "in loyalty and filiality, you cannot satisfy both sides," in the West, the nation's interests came before the family's. According to Zhu, Western culture began hampering Christianity's idea of filial piety began after the time of the Apostle Paul; Paul himself, though his thought had been influenced by Greek culture, "in the end was more colored by Hebrew culture," and hence respected the importance of filial piety. But according to Zhu, the great theologians who followed (and he names St. Athanacius, Augustin, Calvin, and Wesley) were none of them influenced at all by "eastern civilization, so it is little wonder they did not provide adequate explanation of Christ's notion of filial piety."[88]

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[86] Ibid., 25-6.
[87] Hughes, "The Religious Experiment of Hsiao," 28.
[88] Ibid., 26, 31.

To support his claim that Western culture neglects filial piety, Zhu provides numerous anecdotes as evidence, beginning with C. C. Nieh's argument and the story of the university president whose father worked as gatekeeper. After Nieh's account of Western Christians' unfilial behavior, Zhu turns a shaming eye to stories of Chinese Christians who, by neglecting filial piety, caused their parents to shed tears of grief. Zhu told tales of the very wealthy who insisted that their aged parents' perform physical labor, of couples physically abusing parents, and of the probably more pervasive phenomenon of the young showing disgust and revulsion toward their elderly family members.[89]

While the stories he tells are scathing indictments, Zhu carefully distinguishes his own conclusion from Nieh's. Nieh wrote that Christians actively taught unfiliality, in the name of putting God first. Zhu asserted to the contrary that the university president Nieh described might portray Western Christian behavior, but it did not accurately reflect Christian teachings. Zhu explained: "I believe that the reason why this epidemic exists in the church of China is because Chinese church members and church workers were too good at imitating Western culture and the church neglected to promote Christ's filial way." He made three points to support this accusation: first, the Chinese church lacked sermons and teachings about filial piety. Zhu claimed never to have heard a sermon on the topic. His colleague at Jinling Seminary, Frank Price, told him that including Zhu's own sermon, he had heard a total of three sermons on filial piety, all from Chinese pastors. Second, the church lacked literature on filial piety. Though of course Confucianists and Buddhists had numerous writings on the topic, Christianity lacked any

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[89] Ibid., 26-8.

outstanding literature on the topic outside the Bible, in either English or Chinese. Third, major foreign missions in China, including the Presbyterian church and the Methodist Episcopal church, afforded their pastors a salary and a spouse and children subsidy, but no subsidy to support the care of parents. To their credit, Chinese preaching associations' salary systems already included parental support stipends.[90]

One proposed solution to the lack of Christian literature on filial piety was the use of Confucian texts on the subject. This suggestion was made to Zhu by the preacher Wang Zhixin, but Zhu respectfully disagreed. He believed that Jesus had said plenty about filial piety; the problem was not a lack of teachings, but Christians' failure to focus on Christ's teachings about filial piety. While Confucianism was often seen as superior in that it specified so many concrete ways to live filial piety, Zhu proclaimed that Christ's vagueness was a strength that contributed to the universal applicability of his teachings. It was this that helped make the Bible, as the famous theologian Mullins (presumably Edgar Young Mullins) had said, appropriate to every people – in the words of President Woodrow Wilson said, a timeless book.[91]

Within that universal Christianity, Zhu proclaimed that Chinese Christians had a special role to play. "Please, readers," he pled, "do not misunderstand my meaning. Though I think Christianity's filial piety can stand on its own, still I must acknowledge that Christians who have received eastern culture must rise up and advocate for Christ's explanations of filial piety; devotion to Western Christians' filial piety is not enough." To fill this hole in Western Christianity, even ten more Western religious revolutionaries of

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[90] Ibid., 28-9.
[91] Ibid., 29-30, 24.

the caliber of Martin Luther would be insufficient; something else was needed, or rather, someone else. God had a special role for Chinese Christians. Yes, "advocating and practicing Christ's filial way is a mission that God has specially called Chinese Christians to accept." But "as for how to advocate, how to practice, that is another question" — one Zhu proposed and left open for other people and another conversation.[92]

We will turn to some of the proposed answers to Zhu's final question – the question of Christian filial praxis – in the next chapter. Here we have examined the uneven development of a line of thought: how Christians came to see aspects of ancestor worship and filial piety as divinely inspired; how the vision of a past in which God inspired Chinese thinkers radically redefined their understanding of Christianity's place in the world; and how the idea that multiple religions each possessed truth pointed toward a future in which Christianity no longer held a hegemonic position, but in which all religions could enrich each other through exchange and synthesis. Even for more conservative Christians who did not follow this line of thinking to its synthetic endpoint, the Biblical precedent for fulfilment theory enabled a more sympathetic and open approach to Chinese culture, one that moved past the imperialist language of "heathenism" into something more akin to brotherhood and in line with Christian internationalism.

In the debates and conversations that led to new visions of brotherhood and, for some, a world synthesis of religions, Chinese Christians played important roles. They were important as cultural experts and as token participants in a community that aspired

[92] Ibid., 31.

to (or at least gave lip service to) post-imperialist equality. But they were also important as the producers of Chinese visions of Christianity, decolonizing reimaginings of doctrine that were in themselves both revelatory and visionary. Like developments in women's leadership described in chapter one, these ideas were transformatively conservative, affirming old values but within a new religious context that asserted Chinese capability and agency.

The debates and discussions I have analyzed in this chapter occurred in the broad liberal Christian community that included the NCC and other groups with links to Western institutions. In chapter four, we return to the ranks of the NCC. I will discuss how NCC personnel, including the Home Committee, proposed integrating ancestral veneration into Christianity, and how Chinese traditions compared and competed with other visions of Christian family spirituality.

Chapter Four – Family Worship: Chinese Ancestors, Christian Altars

In the previous chapter, I examined debates about whether Christians should continue to practice ancestor worship, and the attitudes and theological views taken by participants in these conversations. Now, I turn to the family religious practices prominent Christians advocated, first examining suggestions for the integration of ancestor veneration and related cultural and religious symbols and practices with Christian ideals and customs. But while some struggled to fit Confucian and Christian practices to each other, compelling alternative models of Christian family spirituality were gaining strength in China. In the second half of the chapter we turn to American Protestant visions of the ideal Christian home. The Christianize the Home Committee of the NCC used and adapted aspects of these ideals, envisioning the Christian home as a place enlivened and inspired through daily family worship.

"How to Advocate, How to Practice" Filial Piety

Some of those determined to rework Christianity into a culturally responsive ideology, one that could fulfill the Chinese imperative of filial piety, made very practical suggestions about how to do so. This section discusses practical recommendations for how Christians could adjust their ceremonies and rituals to resonate with Chinese members and non-members and meet their social and emotional needs. Many Western leaders felt they needed to present a better face to their Chinese contemporaries and critics, putting their best foot forward by showing that they embraced filial piety.[1] They

[1] Jackson, "Ancestral Worship," 240.

aimed to do this by using Chinese practices and symbols to speak a language of reverence and filial piety that they hoped would be heard, recognized, and appreciated by the Chinese.

At the 1907 Centennial Missionary Conference, James Jackson and his Committee on Ancestral Worship made several concrete suggestions of ways to Christianize Chinese practices. One approach was to treat local Christian forebears as ancestors to all of a church's members, commemorating the death days of church members, school benefactors, and founders. Memorial services, which could include such religious ceremonies as Holy Communion, use of selected hymns, readings of certain scriptural and Apocryphal writings, and scripted prayers (Jackson drafted two possibilities) would invite and reflect reverence. Jackson offered as a possible reading a portion of the Apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus, beginning, "Let us now praise famous men, and our fathers that begat us; the Lord manifested in them great glory. Even his mighty power from the beginning…" Jackson argued that such a spirit of honoring others "is in entire harmony with the genius of the Chinese."[2] In 1910, Packenham-Walsh refers to the same Apocryphal writing, which includes this statement: "And some there be which have no memorial, who are perished as though they had not been and are become as though they had not been born." Packenham-Walsh berates the missionary population for not providing better replacement memorial practices and also for failing to recognize the magnitude of the sacrifice made by converts.[3]

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[2] Ibid., 241.
[3] Packenham-Walsh, "Memorials to the Dead and their Relation to Christian Practice," 265.

For commemorating one's non-Christian ancestors, Jackson offered not so much practical suggestions as comforting doctrine, explaining that God "will not judge by the Law or the Gospel those who had not the opportunity of hearing either," and suggesting a prayer on behalf of deceased non-Christian ancestors; the prayer touched on the ancestors only lightly, focusing on gratitude for knowledge of Christ. Jackson also advocated for teaching about "honouring parents and commemorating benefactors" in schools.

In the matter of funerals, Jackson anticipated New Life Movement's calls for frugality, advising that in the Church people be discouraged from the excessive funerary expenditure popular in China. Modeling his advice after one of the maxims in Kangxi's *Sacred Edict* that encouraged the building of family temples and schools, Jackson encouraged use of the funds saved through frugal funerals for such Christian philanthropic projects as "memorial schools, hospitals, reformatories and other benevolent institutions. The Chinese should be made more acquainted with the example of Western nations in these matters," Jackson intoned, "and more attention should be called to the numerous schools, colleges, hospitals and asylums already erected in this land as memorials of the beneficence of Christian philanthropists. In this way they may be stimulated to pious imitation and to find *a better way of honouring the dead* by doing good to the living, and by keeping alive the memory of the departed in the good works which follow them."[4] Making use of the *Sacred Edict* may have been a very clever strategic move for Jackson; the text and its amplifications were tools for spreading Qing interpretations of Confucianism, used to encourage the people to "be good and dutiful

[4] Jackson, "Ancestral Worship," 240-43; emphasis added.

subjects." It was sometimes used to mobilize anti-Christian forces; sinologist Herbert A. Giles described it as a rival to Christianity and one of the forces holding Christianity back.[5] Jackson's reconciliatory stance is clear in his invocation of this important ideological text, but for listeners in the know, its association with anti-Christian movements might have been a quiet spur to greater cultural accommodation.

Jackson opposed destruction of ancestral tablets. His stance seems mostly to have been based on legal necessity, as Qing law threatened to punish by decapitation those casting away or destroying their ancestral tablets ("'like casting away or destroying the corpses of parents'"). Jackson endorsed the suggestion of one Pastor Kranz, who in a paper presented to the Morrison Society, suggested that Christian memorial tablets be made for display in church halls, where special commemorative services could be held for those listed on the tablets. Finally, Jackson suggested that cemeteries be better provided for – beautifully planted, visited at Easter time, and kept neat.[6]

The resolutions finally adopted by the 1907 Conference were not as revolutionary as Jackson likely wished. The resolutions read as follows:

1. That, while the Worship of Ancestors is incompatible with an enlightened and spiritual conception of the Christian faith, and so cannot be tolerated as a practice in the Christian Church, yet we should be careful to encourage in our Christian converts, the feeling of reverence for the memory of the departed which this custom seeks to express and to impress upon the Chinese in general, the fact that Christians attach great importance to filial piety.
2. That, recognizing the full provision made in Christianity for the highest development and expression of filial piety, this Conference recommends that greater prominence be given in preaching, in

[5] Victor H. Mair, "Language and Ideology in the *Sacred Edict*," in David Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan and Evelyn S. Rawski, eds., *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 356-58.
[6] Jackson, "Ancestral Worship," 239-44.

teaching and in religious observances, to the practical duty of reverence to parents, and thus make it evident to non-Christians that the Church regards filial piety as one of the highest of Christian duties.

3. Recognizing that in replacing the worship of ancestors in China by Christianity, many delicate and difficult questions inevitably arise, we would emphasize the necessity for the continuous education of the conscience of the members of the Christian Church by whom all such questions must ultimately be adjusted, expressing our confidence that through the leading and illumination of the Spirit of God, the Church will be guided into right lines of action.
4. That this Conference recommends our Chinese brethren to encourage an affectionate remembrance of the dead by beautifying graves and erecting useful memorials to parents and ancestors, by building or endowing churches, schools, hospitals, asylums, and other charitable institutions as is common in all Christian lands, thus making memorials of the departed a means of helping the living through successive generations.

Just two of four resolutions, the second and fourth, brought up the areas where practical accommodation could be made. Resolution number one affirms restrictions on Christian ancestor worship and gives pride of place to the idea that ancestor worship is a public relations issue for the Christian church. This leaves a tarnish on resolution three, which when read alone seems very supportive and respectful of Chinese agency; when paired with resolution one, resolution three takes on a paternalist passive-aggressive tone of "I know you will make the right decision."

In 1925, these resolutions were described by James Thayer Addison, writing in *The Journal of Religion*, as having constituted the last word on ancestor worship, "so far as united action is concerned."[7] The topic was, however, reopened in the China Continuation Committee in 1917. The China Continuation Committee was the immediate

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[7] Addison, "Chinese Ancestor-Worship and Protestant Christianity," 143.

forebear of the NCC. It had been created after the 1910 Edinburgh Ecumenical Conference in response to calls to turn leadership of the Chinese church over to the Chinese. In 1917, Cheng Jingyi, who had been influential in setting the agenda of the 1910 ecumenical conference, published a report from the Continuation Committee's Special Committee on the Chinese Church, which discussed polygamy and ancestor worship as the two major issues facing the Chinese church. The report contrasted the "worthy motives" for practicing ancestral veneration to the "objectionable motives." It also provided lists of ancestor worship's effects for good and for evil in Chinese society, effects that included the psychological ("it strengthens self-respect"), moral ("It restrains members from bad conduct," "It encourages a benevolent spirit,"), religious ("It encourages idolatry," "It perpetuates and encourages superstition"), and social ("It strengthens the family tie," but "encourages polygamy," and "degrades womanhood").[8]

In a section of his report entitled "Methods of Dealing with Ancestor Worship," Cheng presented a summary of responses to a survey sent to fifty-two church leaders, mostly pastors. The survey inquired specifically about "the present practice of the churches" in regard to ancestor worship. Thirty-four leaders in fifteen provinces and seventeen churches replied to the survey, but Cheng gives no further information about the locations or churches, nor does he specify whether the church leaders contacted were Chinese or foreign.

According to Cheng's survey, all the leaders in question observed the same treatment of ancestral tablets by Christians – "When a person has become a Christian the

[8] C.Y Cheng. "Report of the Special Committee on the Chinese Church," *The Chinese Recorder* 48.6 (June 1917), 364-6.

tablet, if he has the authority to do so, is destroyed or at least removed from its original place of prominence, and kept as a memento merely." Jackson's earlier advice to preserve the tablets was either ignored or considered out of date now that Qing law had been overthrown. Twenty-nine of the leaders surveyed said their churches had no rules about commemoration of ancestors, but all but five felt that bowing, kowtowing, and making offerings to the dead were inappropriate; the five exceptions allowed bowing only. Cheng reported additional methods of commemoration adopted by a Baptist conference that year: "(1) To keep large photographs of the departed parents. (2) To preserve the family tree. (3) To beautiful the cemetery. (4) To hold annually memorial services. (5) To erect memorial halls. (6) To aid in charitable and Christian work in remembrance of the deceased." Other churches held memorial services one or two days per year, at the time of the Chinese Qingming festival, Easter, or the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, the Chongyang festival (often observed as an old folks' day).[9]

As Jackson's report had done in 1907, Cheng's 1917 report emphasized ancestor worship as a barrier to Chinese conversion. The question, "'Has your Church ever met people who are really interested in Christianity but hesitate to join the Church on account of this question,'" yielded so many affirmative answers that Cheng was led to plead: "The time has come for the Church to consider this matter more from a constructive point of view. The Church must clearly determine how far its members can go in the matter of commemorating the departed and of paying filial respect to their memory, without

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[9] Ibid., 366-67. Cf. Shih, "Christianizing China's Festivals and Customs," 683. The Chongyang festival is often taken as a day to worship the god of longevity, a day when married women return to their natal home – a day to pay respects to the old and love the young. Li Lulu, *Zhongguo jie* [Chinese holidays] (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2005), 175, 177.

violating in any way, the teachings of the Word of God. Such a frank consideration on the part of the Church would remove one of the greatest and, in the opinion of the committee, one of the easily avoidable difficulties now encountered in winning men to the Christian faith."

Cheng next made a list, in partial repetition of the Baptist approaches listed above, of "Forms of Commemoration Now Observed" in various parts of China. Cheng made five categories of commemoration. First was the institution of a special Memorial Day to honor deceased parents at Qingming (the tomb-sweeping holiday) or Easter. This type of memorial occurred at the church or the cemetery; where there was no church-level effort to hold it, some individual families took the initiative. Second, Christians beautified and repaired cemeteries, generally at the time of the Qingming festival. Third, some preserved family records, including dates, names, pictures, and biographies, and some enlarged and displayed their parents' photographs in their homes. Fourth, Christians encouraged the building of memorial halls, churches, or other philanthropic giving in the place of elaborate funerals. Fifth, Cheng pointed out that filial piety, which occupied a high place in scriptural teachings, ought to be taught to the young in churches and schools.[10] Here, Cheng's language is quite vague on whether or not filial piety was actually being taught among Chinese Christians at that time or whether he was just advocating it. We can assume that, at least in areas like that studied by Ryan Dunch where Chinese Protestants were relatively independent in their interpretation of Christian doctrine and promoted a fusing of Confucian and Christian principles, filial piety was

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[10] Cheng, "Report of the Special Committee on the Chinese Church," 367-69.

taught as a Christian value.[11] All the practices brought up in Cheng's report (with the exception of the destruction of ancestral tablets) were in line with practices suggested by Jackson in 1907.

In 1917, Cheng's Special Committee on the Chinese Church recommended that a further investigation be made into how to handle ancestral tablets, how to hold memorial services, and how to maintain family records, "'with a view to obtaining especially the views of Christian Chinese leaders regarding these and allied questions.'" The committee sent nine hundred twenty-three letters with copies of a survey. They made clear that the goal of the survey was to understand the *views* of the Chinese leaders, not current practices. Leaders representing twenty-four churches in fifteen provinces responded, sending two hundred sixty-five responses by the time the committee wrote its 1918 report.

With respect to the question of ancestral tablets, the personal opinions of the Chinese pastors were more welcoming than the practices recorded the prior year; sixty-six respondents felt that the tablets should be preserved, some suggesting it be housed in the clan's ancestral hall, and some suggesting a space be made for it in a guest room or other "special place in the home." Those who favored preservation of tablets used one of two lines of reasoning: preserving tablets would help Christians and the church avoid criticism, and it would also help them "[preserve] the memory of the departed." The majority did consider destruction of the tablets to be the right course of action, with suggested methods ranging from immediate and unceremoniously destruction to burial in

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[11] Dunch, *Fuzhou Protestants,* 6.

a grave, a suggestion that attests to the powerful meaning contained in the tablets. Even Christians who claimed not to believe them to have any relation with the ancestors wished to bury them – treating them as the resting place of the souls of the departed that others believed them to be. Some advocated using the destruction of the tablets as a chance to instruct the family, specifying that “a Christian pastor [be] asked to speak to them on the follies of ancestral worship, after which the tablets should be publicly burned, and thus avoid an occasion for adverse criticism.” Clearly the hypothetical criticism pictured here was levied by Christians; one can only imagine these proceedings would have been offensive and disturbing to many non-Christians. Others felt the tablets should be placed in order and photographed before being burned. Clearly there were people on both sides of the issue who were concerned about the preservation of family information. In a section about the keeping of family records this observation is upheld; only nine respondents opposed keeping either family records or biographical sketches. Two hundred five favored keeping both, and forty-three felt one but not the other should be kept.

Cheng’s Committee had five different suggestions for how to preserve the family records and biographies of the departed. Some suggestions made the family the central agency for record preservation, by using a special family Bible with blank pages upon which such information could be recorded, or by starting their family record-keeping with the first Christian progenitor, honoring the moment of the family’s conversion. Other suggestions emphasized the church institution; one that seemed to echo Kranz said that influential Christians should have tablets carved and placed in the Church to invite emulation. The erection of such a tablet would be paired with church preparation of a

biography that could be printed and given to other church members. Another suggestion was that the Church take charge of preparing "a standardized form suitable for keeping ancestral records." Alternately, the family could be left responsible for record-keeping, but the church could be made a repository for information. Families could take such acts as hanging a biographical sketch in the parlor of their home, but also prepare a pamphlet about the ancestor to give to the church, alternately letting "the Church make a collection of material setting forth his life and work in a single volume."

Church leaders were divided in their opinions about methods of memorializing the dead. One hundred eighty respondents affirmed actions like creating headstones, selecting memorial days, and establishing memorials, "regarding these various methods as obvious duties" that could be done in keeping with the financial abilities of those involved. This response seems to indicate a "do the bare minimum and no more" mentality. Others felt greater steps needed to be taken in order to maintain "a record of the life and character of the departed," and to honor them. They suggested measures like those Cheng had listed the year before: enlarging photographs, setting an anniversary on which family members could gather together in memory of the departed, and erecting hospitals, schools, or other institutions of charity or evangelism to be named after the deceased. One hundred eight favored these methods, including a few who suggested the day before or after Easter as an appropriate memorial day. Seven people suggested using the Baptists' six methods outlined in Cheng's 1917 report. Fifty-five, though, felt that beyond keeping gravestones neat, the use of memorials and anniversaries were inappropriate, as "such practice might degenerate into meaningless custom and only

contribute to the growth of superstition."[12] Respondents thus expressed discomfort and hesitation about sliding designations of truth and superstition, and the possible adverse effects of slipping into superstition beliefs and actions. Such distrust of culturally important practices because of the importance of staying clear from superstition provided an intangible barrier even when ecclesiastical doors for synthesis were open.

That the door to synthesis was open is clear. Some of the survey's respondents asked that rules for burial be set by the China Continuation Committee, showing that at that point there was no sense of standard or even generally accepted norm for Christian burial. Others advocated the adoption of certain other Christian councils' rules. With regard to ante-burial ceremonies, the majority advocated "the natural quiet and reverent expressions of grief," and a smaller but sizeable group advocated "lifting the hat and standing before the corpse." Far fewer were in favor of practices reminiscent of kowtowing. Sixty-three felt that standing and bowing before the corpse was acceptable, but only five felt that prostrating was ever acceptable.[13] The kowtow had been a source of moral and manly outrage for Westerners since George Macartney's 1793 refusal to bow before Qianlong;[14] Chinese church leadership felt a moral obligation to refrain. Yet strangely, under a list in the 1918 report of customs that ought to be abandoned, the kowtow is not listed; the report designated instead that "customs contrary to the

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[12] "Appendix II: Report of the Special Committee on the Chinese Church," *Proceedings of the Sixth Annual Meeting of the China Continuation Committee, Shanghai, April 19-24, 1918* (Shanghai: Offices of the China Continuation Committee), 31-2. MRL 6: National Christian Council of China Records, series 1, box 1, folder 3, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

[13] Ibid., 33-34.

[14] Viz. James L. Hevia, *Cherishing Men from Afar: Qing Guest Ritual and the Macartney Embassy of 1793* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995), 32-36.

Scriptures… involving wasteful and useless expenditure" ought to be rejected. Customs that ought to be retained were those that were "not contrary to the Scriptures" that expressed important emotions. On this list were creation of obituaries, banners, and the like. The subtextual focus of much of the report is captured in the phrase "contrary to scriptures," a category that, in spite of all the careful argumentation made by Martin and Jackson, still seems to have contained, for most people, the idea that the kowtow before the ancestral tablets constituted worship of a being other than the Judeo-Christian God.[15] Perhaps here a bifurcation of the community by race and language can be seen. I wonder whether if more Chinese pastors had been privy to the conversations at the 1890 and 1907 conferences, those debates might have given them the sense that categories were flexible and definitions fungible, and these Chinese pastors might have felt able to take more moderate stances on even tablets and bowing.

For a topic that had been taken so seriously in 1917 and 1918, ancestor worship was passed over at the 1922 National Christian Conference of China very lightly indeed. In 1925, Addison noted that the topic "was not even broached" in 1922, but he was wrong – it did appear in two places in the conference proceedings.[16] In both instances, however, the topic is brushed over, seemingly under the assumption that ancestor worship was likely to die a natural death in China's changing world. The topic first arose in a report section on "Ancestor Worship" under "Non-Christian Religious Movements in China." There, ancestor worship was seen as a problem for Christianity again primarily because of the ire drawn to Christians by their opposition to the practice. The report

[15] "Appendix II: Report of the Special Committee on the Chinese Church," 32-4.
[16] Addison, "Chinese Ancestor-Worship and Protestant Christianity," 143.

emphasized the importance of the clan system and the difficulty involved for converts who were ostracized from; nevertheless, all this was seen as a crumbling structure. The report's writers felt that because "among the intellectual class… the old forms of worship have lost much of their power," therefore "all classes are sure to be permeated in time with a different feeling as to the value of the worship of ancestors," giving Christianity an opening to provide an alternative spirituality.[17]

At the 1922 National Christian Conference, Shi Meiyu (Dr. Mary Stone) discussed "Present Problems in the Home." Shi listed extreme expectations of filial piety as one of the family issues "which arise because of the old civilization and the new." Shi took a position in line with many New Culture thinkers about parental dominance; she argued that filial piety had been overemphasized to the point that the repressed "children and younger generations have nothing to say." Still, Dr. Shi, like the anonymous author of the section on ancestor worship just discussed, described ancestor worship's neglect, rather than its continuation, as a problem, querying, "Non Christians have criticized Christian families because they forget their ancestors, but how far should Christians go—should they use incense and lighting candles, or only have some prayers and a memorial service?" Shi left her own question unanswered.[18]

No practical suggestions for integrating Chinese beliefs regarding ancestors were asserted in the 1922 Conference report. The debate about how to integrate filial piety and respect for ancestors with Christianity continued through the 1920s and into the 1930s.

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[17] Frank Rawlinson, Helen Thoburn, and D. MacGillivray, eds., *The Chinese Church as Revealed in the National Christian Council,* 148-9.
[18] Mary Stone (Shi Meiyu), "Present Problems in the Home," in Rawlinson, et al., eds., *The Chinese Church as Revealed in the National Christian Conference*, 472.

The Home Committee had the matter at least somewhat on their radar from its creation.[19] However, it was not made a topic of particular focus by the Home Committee until the 1930s.

In 1930, the topic of ancestor worship was addressed at the East China Region Christianize the Home Leadership Research Conference, at which Shi Yufang (Peter Shih) gave a speech entitled "Zhongguo jieqi he fengsu de Jiduhua" (Christianizing China's Festivals and Customs). In this speech, Shi applied fulfillment theory to concrete practices. He said, "Jesus said once: 'I come not to destroy, but to fulfill.' Therefore, I feel that we should not disregard all Chinese festivals and customs but should, instead, improve them. At the same time we should guard ourselves against thoughtless speeches on this and that subject without making a study of the psychological and historical background of the particular customs concerned." Shi spoke of a Christian friend's parents who, when asked why they had never been to church, answered, "'You don't worship ancestors, and thereby commit a grave offense against our long practiced culture. Furthermore, you don't even respect your living parents.'" In bringing these allegations before the conference and his readers, Shi wrote with encompassing inclusiveness, "We all regret that because the Church in China has not given proper attention to the question of ancestor worship, Christianity has suffered drawbacks. For, paying respect to one's ancestors is an important duty. Does the Bible forbid us to do so? If we remove all the stumbling-blocks which hinder people from accepting Christ, then we may lift Him

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[19] *ZQJX di'er jie nianhui baogao,* 147.

up!”[20] Shi advocated several concrete practices to effect this removal of stumbling-blocks and to bring the home and the Church closer together.

Like Cheng Jingyi, Shi advocated the infusion of the Qingming festival with Christian meaning. He gave a personal account of experiences he had while teaching at the Hunan Bible School in Changsha the previous April. Shi traveled with the Bible School to the church cemetery, which was located on a hill called “the Hill of Resurrection.” After wandering through the cemetery and reading the tombstones, the group held a service including “scripture reading, hymn, sermon, and a prayer.” Two days later local churches held a similar service with the theme of meditation “on the virtuous lives of their departed ancestors.” Shi seemed thrilled with this experience. He said, “I praised the Lord for this opportunity to get acquainted with the representative members of over one hundred and seventy families. I feel we must keep on promoting this memorial service until it is adopted by the churches in every locality.”[21]

Shi took his topic beyond just ancestor worship, addressing other Chinese festivals that could also be infused with a Christian meaning. Cheng had suggested the use of the Chongyang festival, which occurred on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month, as a day for memorializing ancestors. Shi had a different proposal for that already multi-purposed holiday. He suggested that both Chongyang and the Dragon-boat festival, which occurred on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month and involved ceremonial

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[20] Shi Yufang, *“Zhongguo jieqi he fengsu de Jiduhua”* 31-38. The English translation from which I took these quotes was published the next fall: Y.F. Shih, “Christianizing China’s Festivals and Customs,” 681.
[21] Shih also gave the example of a filial Christian of his acquaintance memorialized an ancestor in line with suggestions made by Cheng and in the 1918 survey respondents, keeping a memorial hall in his own home, where he displays writings, paintings, and keepsakes of his ancestor, as well as his portrait. This Christian man told guests to his home the story of his ancestor, and held a yearly ceremony with family and friends in memory of this esteemed forebear.

cleansing of the household, be repurposed by the Church "to promote a general house-cleaning movement." The real-life model for this adjustment was a Mr. Xu who invited several neighborhood families to a service in his home on the evening of the Dragon-boat festival, where he gave a sermon in which he "emphasized the Christian duty of maintaining a clean house." Shi suggested that a Thanksgiving holiday be implemented in the place of the mid-autumn festival, with the Nanking Theological Seminary's recently inaugurated ceremony as model.

Finally, Shi suggested a Christian use of that most important and anticipated of Chinese festivals, New Year's Eve. In this case, his model was a service he presided over in Hangzhou in 1937. A family talent show of sorts, the service was a performance program where different families were assigned to perform. Shi pointed out that such a program met a church need for members to get to know each other and to contribute in their congregations.[22]

In all these ideas, Shih urged sincere Christian transformation. He said, "I must say, too many people are using this term 'Christianize.' Really, are we us-izing Christ, or is he Christ-izing us?"[23] A mere coloring with Christian things would fade; what was needed was true, life-giving religious transformation of people's lives.[24] Shi implies here that which customs people adhered to was almost immaterial; the important thing was whether they were led to Christ and changed by him.

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[22] Y.F. Shih, "Christianizing China's Festivals and Customs," 682-4.
[23] Shi Yufang, "Zhongguo Jieqi he fengsu de Jiduhua," 36.
[24] Y.F. Shih, "Christianizing China's Festivals and Customs," 684-5.

In March 1931, the Home Committee sounded a striking note on the matter of ancestor worship when it sent out a survey "requesting the opinions of believers from across the nation." The East China Conference for Leaders of the Christianizing the Home Movement produced a polished survey which it distributed in 1931. While I have not located a record of the responses received, the survey's questions are illuminating. They reveal changes made since the groundbreaking 1907 resolutions. The survey first outlines five sets of principles: reasons to practice ancestor veneration, principles to guide ancestor veneration, methods of ancestor veneration, ancestor veneration ceremonies, and the attitudes believers living in unbelieving homes should take toward ancestor veneration. After laying out the Conference's proposals each set of principles, the survey leaves space for response, providing the prompts: "(1) Reasons why I (We) approve or do not approve" and "(2) I (we) suggest."

The survey presented familiar justifications for Christians practicing ancestor veneration, including the idea that filial piety holds an important place at the heart of Chinese ethics, that it affirms the Christian notion that the soul is not destroyed at death, that ancestor worship is not the same as worshiping idols, that family love is eternal, and that rejecting ancestor worship would be a barrier to other Chinese accepting Christianity. One of the seven reasons to support Christian ancestral veneration was that a religious spirit could be found therein that might be developed and made use of in the Christian home, a suggestion that echoes the ideals of fulfillment theory. In the section on principles to guide ancestral veneration we see reflected the fear of superstition framed in terms of personal discernment and agency: one should honor the spirit of filial piety, but

guard against superstition, and one must not violate the Spirit of Christ or lose one's freedom of conscience.

Not violating one's conscience is a theme that came up a second time later in the recommendations: when paying respects to the deceased, one may stand straight or bow, but one should in all cases follow one's conscience and not be forceful or dogmatic. Here we must note the range of options presented. There is no mention made of kowtowing; the committee in essence kept that off the table. Similarly, in the portion about what attitude believers in non-Christian homes should take, women are encouraged to discuss religious freedom at the time of engagement, sacrificing material benefits when necessary to preserve their own beliefs. In instances when material benefits of veneration (presumably referring to clan-based education rights) may be enjoyed without crossing the line to worshipful behaviors, one may choose, "but when there is no choice, it is better to sacrifice privileges in order to keep one's beliefs."[25] The velvety injunctions to flexibility covered iron-hard Christian determination to avoid entanglement in sinful practices.

The debate on ancestor worship continued through the 1930s, both in the broader Christian community, where missionaries such as A.J. Brace and T.W. Douglas James championed greater Christianization of ancestor worship,[26] and within the Christianize the Home Committee. In 1936, the Home Committee drafted its own second five-year

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[25] "Zhengqiu quanguo xintu duiyu jingzu wenti jianyi'an de yijian."
[26] Brace. "Christianizing Ancestor Reverence," 786-94; T.W. Douglas James, "'Christianizing Ancestor Reverence,'" [Letter to the Editor], *The Chinese Recorder* 65.4 (April 1934), 261-63.

plan,[27] Wishing to carry on its work in a similar vein to the previous five years. It set out topics for the research topics for the Christianize the Home Week program for the next five years, and also initiated a research project on family problems, to take place through the efforts of teams of surveyors in twelve regions. One of fifteen topics to be examined was "improving the worship of ancestors and festival season customs." According to the new five-year plan, the projected topic for 1939 was "Confucian Family Relationships in a Christian Family," which presumably would contain a discussion of so central a family practice as ancestral worship.[28]

In the end, though, the topic for 1939's Home Week changed. The 1937 invasion of the Japanese created a new situation; while the Home Week continued to occur nearly yearly, the war seems to have created a new set of priorities for the Home Committee. Instead of "Confucian Family Relationships in a Christian Family," the 1939 Home Week materials addressed the topic "The Home in the Present Crisis," with subtopics including "The Home and the Economic Crisis," "The Training of Children for Honesty, Truth, Loyalty and Purity in Time of Crisis," and "Family Spiritual Life."[29] The upheaval

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[27] *The Tenth Meeting of the National Christian Council of China*. Shanghai: The National Christian Council of China, 1935, 69-70. SMA U123-0-20.

[28] *ZQJX Jiduhua jiating weiyuanhui diyijie nianhui baogao,* 13, 15-19.

[29] Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui Jiduhua jiating weiyuanhui [NCC Christianize the Home Committee], ed. *Yijiusanba nian shi yue zhi yijiusanjiu nian shi yue (quannian chenxu): chengxu er* [1938 October till 1939 October (full year program): Program II], second edition. HDSXY; Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui Jiduhua jiating weiyuanhui [NCC Christianize the Home Committee], ed. *Yijiusanba nian shi yue zhi yijiusanjiu nian shi yue (quannian chenxu): chengxu san* [1938 October till 1939 October (full year program): Program III], second edition. HDSXY; Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui Jiduhua jiating weiyuanhui [NCC Christianize the Home Committee], ed. *Yijiusanba nian shi yue zhi yijiusanjiu nian shi yue (quannian chenxu): chengxu wu* [1938 October till 1939 October (full year program): Program V], second edition. HDSXY.

of war and the necessity of equipping families to handle them seemed to be a different and more urgent project than responding to Confucian relationships.

The shifting of priorities for the 1939 Home Week could be seen as a sign of missionaries' cultural imperialism and their Chinese counterparts' complicity in undervaluing the Chinese cultural heritage. Otherwise, why could they not have met perceived needs for children's moral training in a time of war through teaching Confucian values? But the change might make more sense if we imagine how Christians viewed their position in their historical moment. The changed topic for the 1939 Home Week may point to a broader trend whereby cultural imperialism and modernization merged in a matter of practicality. If Christians saw Confucianism as dying out in the onslaught of modern problems and modern solutions, the war might have seemed to hasten the change. In times of emergency many, not just Christians, were finding compromises and practical solutions in response to overwhelming change; perhaps in the new circumstances and challenges of war, hanging on to Confucian family norms shifted from an admirable task to an unlikely one. By looking at topics that got air time during the war, we can get a feel for what the Home Committee felt was essential and what could go. The decision to let the focus on Christian Confucian relationships fall by the wayside could reflect a change in priorities based on shifting personnel and other structural changes, but it could also reflect a sense that Confucianism's downfall was inevitable, as the 1922 conference report implied.

There were many publications about the family that ignored Chinese culture in favor of a way presumed better. In 1939, a book called *Jiu dexing de xin jiaofa* (New ways of teaching old virtues) was published by the Christian Literature Society in

Shanghai. The “old virtues” considered included such ideals as honesty and obedience, but the presentation of the virtues and the discussion of how to teach them to one’s children seem completely devoid of cultural content that might mark them as either Chinese or Western values. Divorced from explicit reference to any particular past, the “old virtues” are held up within a framework of new methods, methods based on psychology and modern parenting method “adapted to meet the needs of the era.” Rather than responding against or in line with a specified past, the book was written for a new age of parenting; like the family pictured on its cover, the book is fully committed to modern hygienic Christianity (see figure 4.1).[30]

From the recommendations discussed above, we can see that there was no consensus on how much or by what methods Christianity should indigenize. The

Figure 4.1: *New Ways of Teaching Old Virtues,* 1939.

[30] Molly Browne-Wilkinson, *Jiu dexing de xin jiaofa* (English title: New Versions of Old Virtues). Tr. C.C. Hong and M.H. Brown. Shanghai: Christian Literature Society, 1939, 1, introduction page 2, HDSXY.

suggestions made did take certain acts off the table; none of the recommendations we read actually advocated that ancestor veneration be carried on without any change, for instance, and kowtowing was also apparently considered beyond the pale. The need to render Christianity with Chinese cultural properties was important – highly-placed Chinese Christians led discussions about how to manage it – but it was not easily nor simply addressed. The historical ramifications of old papal proscriptions against ancestor worship were too present for a new hard-and-fast rule to feel appropriate; further, the NCC had specifically foresworn creedal statements. Seeing itself as a clearing-house for ideas and resources, it is perhaps natural that it fostered discussions rather than seeking to lay these knotty questions to rest.

Family Worship: An Alternative Spiritual Core for the Family

Even as tensions over imperialism created a push toward synthesis with Chinese family-based religiosity, a sense of the forward push of historical progress pulled many Christians toward “modern” approaches to home, family, and particular admixtures of rationalism and religion. As discussed in previous chapters, the spread of rationalism was both hailed and feared within Christian churches, for it was simultaneously seen as a threat to all spirituality and as an ally in Christianity’s fight against superstition. As the previous two chapters of this dissertation have shown, a sense of cultural superiority was not universal among Christians or even missionaries; still, such assumptions likely contributed to Christian focus on an alternative form of family spirituality, which functioned as a replacement for lesser or more fraught practices of family spirituality, like

ancestor worship. The central practice in this alternate family spirituality was usually called simply "family worship" *(jiating libai)*.

Victorian ideals of domesticity fed a focus on family spirituality from early on in the Protestant missionary movement. The idea that domestic space was hallowed space, and women its guardians and sources of spirituality, has been discussed extensively in historical literature.[31] This idea was established in the U.S. as early as the late 1820s.[32] By the post-Civil War era, new social forces caused anxiety about the disintegration of the family unit, leading to fresh urgency in rhetoric about the need for a sacred core to home life. Publications indicate that fresh waves of intense interest in the home arose in the early decades of the twentieth century. Various concerns led people to worry about the fate of the family, including the "boarding school fad"[33] which took children away from their homes, the influence of a secular state's control over education,[34] and the effects of the industrial revolution more generally.[35]

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[31] E.g. Colleen McDannell, *The Christian Home in Victorian America, 1840-1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 1986; Stephanie Coontz, *The Social Origins of Private Life: A History of American Families, 1600-1900* (New York: Verso, 1988), 184-86; Randall Balmer, "American Fundamentalism: The Ideal of Femininity," in *Fundamentalism and Gender*, ed. John Stratton Hawley (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 49-53; A. Gregory Schneider, *The Way of the Cross Leads Home: The Domestication of American Methodism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993).

[32] Julius H. Bailey. *Around the Family Altar: Domesticity in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 1865-1900* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), 12; Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," 151-174.

[33] Malcolm James MacLeod, "The Perfume of the Home—The Family Altar," *The New York Observer*, Jan 11, 1912. https://books.google.com/books?id=RrhLAAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.

[34] Eugene R. Hendrix, "The Home and Religious Education," *Religious Education* 5.3 (Aug 1, 1910), 238.

[35] Walter S. Athearn, "The Responsibility of the School Toward the Family," *Religious Education* 5.2 (June 1910), 127.

During the late nineteenth century, the American Sunday School Union, which had been formed in 1824 from a conglomeration of local Sunday School unions,[36] began to focus on the home. A Reverend W.A. Duncan had founded a "Home Class" in 1881 in response to a woman's suggestion that the Sunday School class she ran out of her home should be receiving help from the formal Sunday school organization. Duncan ran with her idea. Initially, he wanted to enlist women as canvassers and recruiters for the Sunday school as well as teachers of Home Classes. Women seemed a natural fit for these jobs "because of their comparative leisure, their greater tact and sympathy, and their readier access to all sorts of homes;" they could expand the Sunday School's influence and its personnel simultaneously.[37] As initially constituted, the group's goal was "'to offer the open Bible by the hand of the living Home Class Visitor to every home, man, woman, and child not connected with any other department of the Sunday-school.' Its field of operation is found among those who for any reason cannot, or will not, attend the regular Sunday-school services."[38]

While Duncan first came up with the idea of taking the Sunday School to those who could not make the trip, another man, Reverend S.W. Dike, came up with a format that did away with the need for visiting teachers. Under Dike's plan, the Sunday School

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[36] Anne M. Boylan, *Sunday School: The Formation of an American Institution, 1790-1880* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 61.
[37] Marshall Custiss Hazard, *Home Classes or the Home Department of the Sunday School: Its History, Purpose and Plan, Organization, Methods, Requisites and Difficulties* (Boston and Chicago: Congregational Sunday School and Publishing Society, 1895), 10-11.
[38] W. A. Duncan, "The Home Department," in Philip E. Howard, ed., *Sunday-schools the World Around: The Official Report of the World's Fifth Sunday-School Convention, in Rome, May 18-23, 1907* (Philadelphia, PA: The World's Sunday-School Executive Committee, 1907), 127.

would elicit personal pledges to do individual study. The Sunday School Union embraced Dike's plan in 1885, just four years after Duncan started his "Home Class."

Dike's program also promoted the home as an institution to be studied and improved. A sociologist, he saw the home as of central importance in society, and hoped to aid its proper formation by promoting regular Bible study in it. The Home Department supported Bible study at home by issuing pledge cards to commit participants to studying their lessons.[39] After Dike's and Duncan's projects were merged, the Home Department used pledge cards to reach out to all kinds of people who could not come to Sunday School, including the housebound and people in hospitals, prisons, nursing homes, orphanages, and reformatories.[40]

The Home Department's method of drawing people into Sunday School activity was very effective. By 1907, many men were joining the Home Department because their occupations kept them away from Sunday services, but in spite of the obvious need for male Visitors, the majority of those serving in the Home Department were still women.[41] Members of the regular Sunday school were encouraged to ask their family members to join either the Home Department or the main Sunday School. Flora Stebbins, who wrote a book called *The Home Department of Today* that described and promoted the Home Department, suggested a sign be placed on the wall of the Sunday school bearing the words: "Every member of every family a member of some department of our Sunday-

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[39] Hazard, *Home Classes or the Home Department*, 27-30.
[40] Duncan, "The Home Department," 130; Hazard, *Home Classes or the Home Department*, 30-31.
[41] Flora V. Stebbins, *The Home Department of To-day* (Philadelphia, PA: The Sunday School Times Company, 1907), 21.

school."[42] The slogan was a mouthful, but it represented a Sunday School reality. When coupled with "cradle rolls" (lists of the infants born to families with Sunday School members), a Home Department could certainly swell Sunday School numbers impressively. Some effort from the pastor or Home Department workers could transfer on-paper membership into real participation.[43] One promoter wrote: "The Home Department is a valuable feeder to the main Sunday School. The fear sometimes expressed that some will take the easy, stay-at-home method of discharging their Sunday School obligations provided by the department is not realized in experience, but rather the contrary." His report goes on to describe how the Home Department had helped people develop an interest in Sunday school and even sometimes brought people into leadership within it.[44] The Home Department served people in many Christian denominations.[45] Its influence was quantified in a speech by Duncan in 1907, twenty-six years after its formation: "We have to-day, in round numbers, 500,000 Home Department members in 15,000 churches, and 50,000 'Home Class Visitors,' who will make 2,000,000 calls this year, raise $100,000 for missions and leave 2,000,000 quarterlies in the homes of the students."[46] By 1911, there were 19,700 Home Departments, and by 1914, the number had reached 26,598.[47]

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[42] Flora B. Stebbins, "The Home Department of the Sunday School. Part of an article by Miss Flora B. Stebbins in the 'Sunday School Encyclopedia.'" *China Sunday School Journal* Vol. VI, No. 5 (May 1918), 999; Stebbins, *The Home Department of To-day*, 15-16.
[43] Stebbins, *The Home Department of To-day*, 25.
[44] E.M. Ferguson, "What the Home Department Is: Chapter one from a booklet by E.M. Ferguson, Westminster Press, Phil." *China Sunday School Journal* VI.5 (May 1918), 997.
[45] Stebbins, *The Home Department of To-day*, 3-4; Ferguson, "What the Home Department Is," 998.
[46] W. A. Duncan, "The Home Department," 128.
[47] William Hamilton, "[Home Department] General Chairman's Statement," in J. Clayton Youker, ed. *Organized Sunday School Work in America, 1911-1914: Official Report of the Fourteenth International Sunday School Convention, Chicago, Illinois, 1914"* (Chicago, IL: Executive Committee of the International Sunday School Association, 1914), 316.

Such successful recruiting notwithstanding, the Home Department fell short of Dike's goal to study and improve homes. In 1915, Milton S. Littlefield published an article in the journal *Religious Education* on the topic "The Church in Co-operation with the Home." Littlefield argued: "Hitherto, the work has been one-sided. The Sunday school has looked upon the home merely as a recruiting ground. It has organized cradle rolls to bring new pupils into the school. It has organized the home department for the purpose of bringing itself into the homes. But the Sunday school can never be what it should be until the recognition of the supremacy of the home is absolute."[48]

An invitation to the Home Department prepared by the Department of Sunday Schools of the Southern Methodist Church shows how the Department functioned, and highlights the attitude that made its efforts seem, as stated in Littlefield's indictment, like a church-centric effort at evangelization rather than a home-centric push for spirituality:

> By becoming a member of the Home Department you come into connection with our Sunday school. We cordially welcome you as one with us. … You will have the advantage of the excellent lesson helps taken by the school, and can study with us in your own home the lessons which we take up in the school. You will be invited to all our Sunday school socials, picnics, entertainments, etc. You are urged to come into the main school as often as you can find it convenient, and when there will be placed in a class or can remain as a visitor at your choice.
> … Examine the Quarterly carefully, noting its map, its treatment of the lessons, and all of its aids, and see how much help you can get from it in studying the lessons. It is a full and inexpensive commentary. Will you not avail yourself of it and of the wide fellowship of study into which it will bring you?[49]

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[48] Milton S. Littlefield, "The Church in Co-operation with the Home," *Religious Education* 4.6 (Feb. 1915), 583.
[49] "An Invitation to the Department," *China Sunday School Journal* VI.5 (May 1918), 1004-5.

The home was presented here as a place of spiritual growth in isolation; it was meant to help draw people into the Sunday School, with all its proffered sociability. Women were a large part of the Sunday School's functioning, making up the majority of teachers serving there; "teaching Sunday school [came] to be seen as a natural extension of women's nurturing role."[50]

Many women who had been involved in the Sunday School as teachers (and as students) became part of the flood of women entering the mission field in the late nineteenth century. By 1890, women made up sixty percent of the American mission force.[51] They likely carried from their Sunday School experience the idea that the home could be a recruiting ground for new Christians, an idea prevalent in early Protestant missionary work in China. In China only female workers could get access to homes, and therefore to women, for it was at least ostensibly expected that women work in the home's inner quarters and abstain from all contact with unrelated men.[52] Like the Sunday School Home Department, missions counted on women missionaries to bring Christianity to women in their homes.[53]

Female missionaries in China often undertook the training of Chinese "Bible women." Bible women were usually older women who were widows or otherwise living lives outside the norm, in which their relationships as mothers, daughters, mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law might otherwise have shaped their daily activities. Some were widows of preachers, or had first been washerwomen or cooks to missionaries; others had

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[50] Boylan, *Sunday School*, 114-16.
[51] Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, xiii, 30.
[52] Ibid., xv.
[53] Robert, "The 'Christian Home,'" 148.

prior leadership experience in Buddhist or Daoist sects. They, like female missionaries, had to have a certain freedom from family responsibilities in order to be full-time Christian workers.[54] Reports from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) show that Bible women in China were able to gain access to many of those Chinese women who, according to social ideals, were supposed to stay in the home and have only the most limited interactions with men. Fulfilling a necessary prerequisite to the effective spread of religious literature, the Bible women worked to increase literacy among women, making Bible study more accessible to them.[55] In spite of the increased ease of their access, there were some concerns about Bible women's qualifications; speaking at the National Christian Conference of 1922, one female Chinese Church leader wrote about "the inadequate provision the Church has made for both the women of today and of tomorrow." She specified, "our Bible women, devoted souls in the main, are precariously trained, and often regarded as no better than colporteurs, rather than as dignified and intelligent Christian workers."[56] Nonetheless they provided an important working force of Christian women who could gain access to other women, in their homes.

School children were often seen as the point of entry, a way to bring Christianity to the other people in a family. A missionary report from Zhili noted that "A systematic

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[54] Ling Oi Ki, "Bible Women," in Jessie G. Lutz, ed., *Pioneer Chinese Christian Women: Gender, Christianity, and Social Mobility* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2010), 247-9; Hunter, *Gospel of Gentility*, 16 and (regarding single female missionaries' easier contributions to evangelistic work), chapters 2-4, passim.
[55] *The Chihli District of The North China Mission: Annual Report, 1914* (The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, 1914), 3, 17.
[56] Mrs. H.C. Mei, "Making the Home Christian," in Rawlinson et al, eds., *The Chinese Church as Revealed in the National Christian Conference,* 477.

canvass of all the families from which children have come into the schools and a definite effort to win them has been made. Perhaps the Christians have been a little too content to work in the homes, however, and so these new believers have not known the value of fellowship in the church, but there must soon be a gathering in." While clearly pleased with work done in the homes, the tension some missionaries felt between church-centered and home-centered religious observance can be seen in the reporting missionary's admission of the success of in-home preaching: "… One woman said, when the places [where preaching was scheduled] were mentioned, 'Why, I want to preach in my own court and invite in all my neighbors!'" Still, the report confesses, "Her life carried with it no reproach for the name of Christ, and her love won two of her nearest neighbors that very week."[57]

Success at bringing Christianity into Chinese homes through teaching children was also noted in the report of the Peking Station of the ABCFM. "In connection with the Y.W.C.A. there are several groups for voluntary Bible study,... and every Sunday over thirty go out to teach in six different centers.… In the chapels they are tactful and patient with the ignorant noisy street children, teaching them songs and verses until they are transformed into very fair Sunday-School models, though you might not recognize them as such. Yet when we realize that each one of these four or five hundred is carrying the influence of this love and teaching into his poor untutored home, we marvel at the great work God has given us to do."[58] The ABCFM report issued in the same year from Tungchow noted that one teacher, Miss Chao, was working in a neighborhood with more

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[57] *The Chihli District Annual Report 1914,* 3.
[58] Ibid., 13-14.

children than she could teach. The reporting missionary pointed out that appointing a young assistant would allow Miss Chao to take on forty or so additional pupils. "Not to do this," the missionary pointed out, "is to lose the chance of getting hold of the families we most want to help."[59]

From these reports we can see that the home in China was seen as a site for possible conversions, but in China as in the U.S., that motivation did not preclude consideration of the home as important in and of itself, as Littlefield implied. When referring to "families we most want to help," the missionary quoted above may well have had material as well as spiritual aid to the home and family in mind.[60] Hygiene and scientific housekeeping aside, it is likely that the missionaries in this group were motivated to bring Christianity into homes on the assumption that it would help make the homes and families better and happier, not least through the practice of family worship. Dana L. Robert, a historian of missions and world Christianity, has pointed out that by the 1830s, the home was "the very bedrock of the evangelical worldview," and therefore female missionaries' responsibilities over "the details of domestic life made them both the most dedicated and the most successful emissaries of an entire civilization."[61] Concern with improvement of the spiritual quality of the home was not limited to female missionaries, though; we can see it in some Sunday School leaders as well. Here, as in

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[59] Ibid., 20.
[60] The ABCFM report from Tungchow supports this idea; it also included a report of lectures given to women on such topics as preventing tuberculosis, tooth brushing, home hygiene, early childhood education and the proper care of infants. Ibid., 16
[61] Robert, "The 'Christian Home,'" 140.

earlier chapters about ancestor worship, we can see that where spirituality was concerned, men felt the need to lead and be part of discussions on the home.

Duncan, the founder of the first Sunday School "Home Class," expounded the idea of the families as centers of spiritual power, invoking a sense of antiquity in his description of family worship, at a convention held in Rome in 1907. Duncan quoted the biblical book of Deuteronomy, finding evidence of a Hebrew precedent for family worship: "'Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.' So it came to pass," Duncan pontificated, "that under this command, every house held a Mosaic Home Class, taught daily by the father, supplementing temple and synagogue ritual, building families into a people, and that people into a nation..." Duncan drew on more recent antiquities as well, referencing the modes of visiting and teaching used by Jesus and by the early apostles. Duncan made a case for a family-centric church, finding in the church's many homes a bastion of Protestant strength even in Catholic Rome.

> Dr. Gray, in his two great lectures before the convention, told us that in [the days of the early Christian Church], here in Rome, the old *domicile* or *domicilium*, with its center and open court, was the place where the early disciples, as families and churches, met and held their services of song and gospel, worshiping and teaching. They had no other basilica but their homes. They had no temple, either in Jerusalem, at Ephesus, or here at Rome. They had to match home against temple. So here in Rome, to-day, with three hundred and sixty-five churches and cathedrals against your score or more of churches, you have, at least, 10,000 Protestant homes open to you..."[62]

[62] Duncan, "The Home Department," 131-4.

Duncan saw the home as a center of spiritual strength, internal but shared, that kept Christianity strong within hostile circumstances, an image that was applicable in many a real or imagined vulnerability.

The Family Altar

Concerns about industrialization and the effects of boarding-school life on the family unit found voice in increasing calls for a return to the "family altar" in the early twentieth century. The family altar, which denoted family spirituality springing from united worship in the home, was an old idea; a leaflet printed in Cheapside, London, in 1693 uses the term in a similar way and with a similar purpose to early twentieth century documents when it takes the title "A Family Altar Erected to the Honour of the Eternal God: Or, A Solemn Essay to Promote the Worship of God in Private Houses" (see figure 4.2).[63] While the term was often clearly used in a metaphorical sense,[64] the family altar was sometimes a literal altar, as in the home of one new groom and bride described in a short 1882 article.[65]

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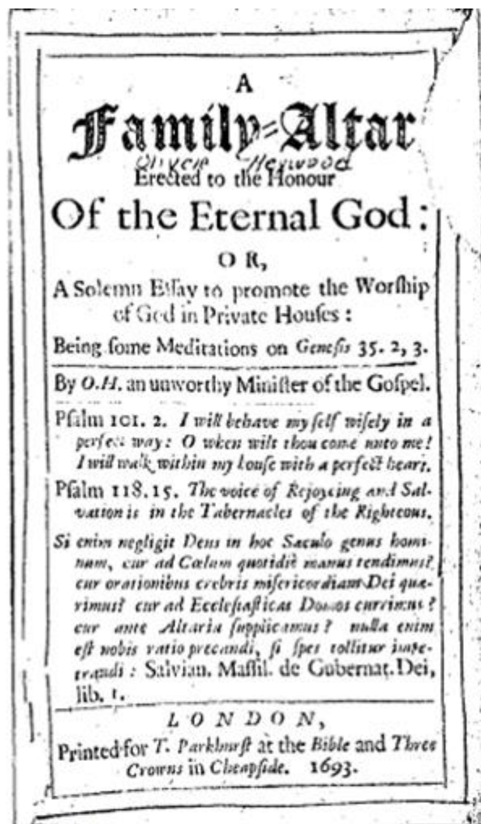
[63] Oliver Heywood, "A Family Altar Erected to the Honour of the Eternal God: Or, a Solemn Essay to Promote the Worship of God in Private Houses," London, 1693. *Early English Books Online*. http://eebo.chadwyck.com/search/full_rec?SOURCE=pgimages.cfg&ACTION=ByID&ID=V61695.
[64] E.g. Hazen F. Werner, "Build a Family Altar Now," in *The Family Altar* (Nashville, Tennessee: The Upper Room, 1946), 7; J.R. Miller, *The Home Beautiful* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1912), 178.
[65] A Father, "The Family Altar Erected," in *The Christian Treasury: Containing Contributions from Ministers and Members of Various Evangelical Denominations* (Edinburgh: Johnstone, Hunter & Co, 1882), 199.



A

Family-Altar

Erected to the Honour

Of the Eternal God:

OR,

A Solemn Essay to promote the Worship of God in Private Houses:

Being some Meditations on *Genesis* 35. 2, 3.

By *O.H.* an unworthy Minister of the Gospel.

Psalm 101. 2. *I will behave my self wisely in a perfect way: O when wilt thou come unto me! I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.*

Psalm 118. 15. *The voice of Rejoycing and Salvation is in the Tabernacles of the Righteous.*

Si enim negligit Deus in hoc Saeculo genus hominum, cur ad Caelum quotidiè manus tendimus? cur orationibus crebris misericordiam Dei quaerimus? cur ad Ecclesiasticas Domos currimus? cur ante Altaria supplicamus? nulla enim est nobis ratio precandi, si spes tollitur impetrandi: Salvian. Massil. de Gubernat. Dei, lib. 1.

LONDON,

Printed for *T. Parkhurst* at the *Bible* and *Three Crowns* in *Cheapside*. 1693.

Figure 4.2: *A Family Altar Erected to the Honour of the Eternal God,* 1693.

Like Duncan, who found family worship precedents in the Old Testament, writers who invoked the family altar often explicitly referred to ancient practices. Many referred to the example of the Hebrew patriarchs like Abraham, with such introductory statements as: "In the old patriarchal days, when the tent was set up, if only for a night, an altar was also erected and sacrifices of prayer and praise were offered to God."[66] This reference to a time presumed to be more family-centric had great symbolic power, a power tapped into through the most modern technologies of print, radio, and social organization. Various organizations and efforts sprang up around this concept. A radio show called

[66] Miller, *The Home Beautiful*, 171. Other examples in which Abraham is invoked: *The Family Altar* (Richmond, VA: The General Assembly Executive Committee of Publication Presbyterian Church, (1915?)), title page. Roy H. Short, "The Family Altar," reprinted in *The Family Altar* (Nashville, TN: The Upper Room, 1946), 11.

"The Family Altar" published a hymnal around the turn of the century, in which reference is made to the "radio family" of listeners (see figure 4.3)[67]. In 1909 a Family Altar League was created in Chicago. It published daily readings from the Bible with suggestions for family worship. Many pastors enthusiastically embraced the organization, and some proposed an annual Family Altar Day including a sermon on the needs of family and home and an invitation to join the League, which by 1916 had sixty thousand affiliated families. The Family Altar League, like the Sunday School Home Department had long done, offered pledge cards, but committing people to regular family worship practice, not just individual study.[68]

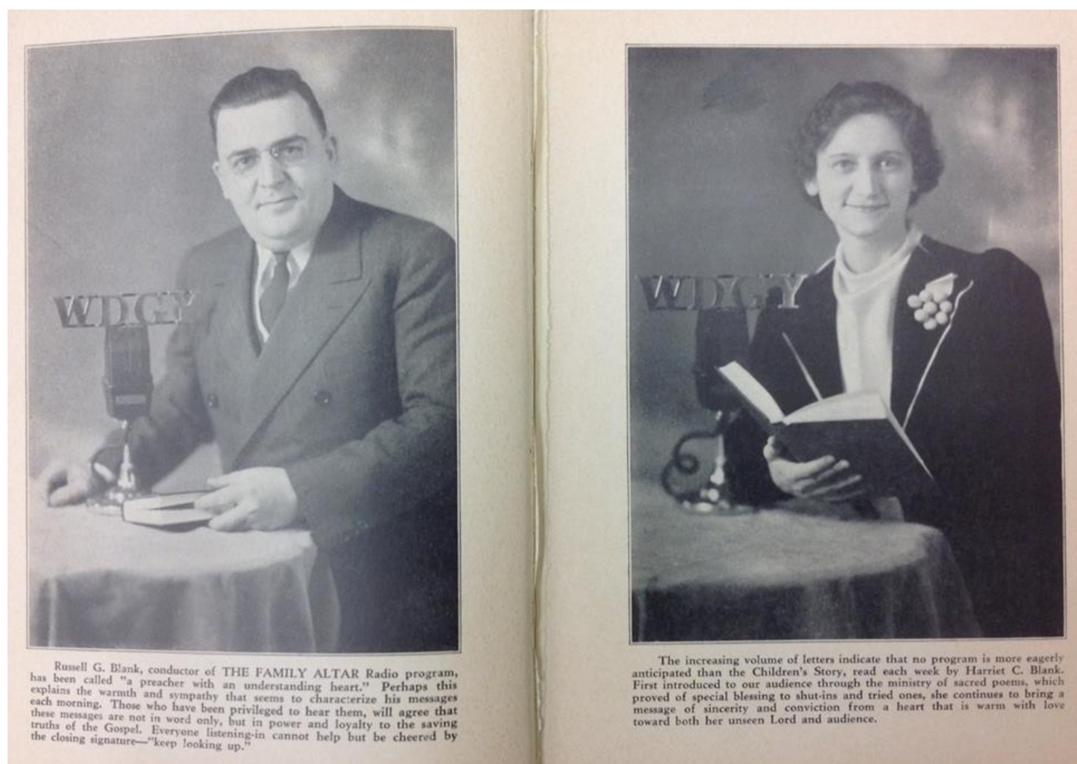


Figure 4.3: *The Family Altar Radio Hymns*

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[67] Family Altar Broadcast, *The Family Altar Radio Hymns* (Minneapolis, MN: Family Altar Bookshop, 19??).
[68] Frank Hayes, "The Family Altar League," *The New York Observer* LXXXIX.10 (Sept. 1910), 302; on the number of affiliated families, see "Family Worship," *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, LXIV.43 (Oct. 1916), 1015.

The Family Altar League was ecumenical, but the movement to recenter religion in the home went beyond even its ecumenical reach, touching even Christians who ostensibly maintained separation from the evangelical Christian community. In 1915, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announced a new program called "Home Evening," which was intended to promote parents' spiritual leadership and children's education about the needs of the home. While the term "family altar" was not used, the Home Evening program certainly appears designed in the same vein as other family worship promotion programs.[69] The China Continuation Committee's call for a Home Sunday in 1918 was likely part of this wave of programs designed to support family worship.

In 1917, the *China Mission Yearbook*, which was published by the China Continuation Committee, reported that considerable "attention has been given during the year to the question of family worship." An investigation had been done in several large cities in China, and it found that many Christian families were not praying and studying the Bible together. The *Yearbook* therefore issued a call to the churches in the provinces to support family worship work.[70]

It was in response to the China Continuation Committee's resolution that the *China Sunday School Journal* published its special edition on the Home in 1918, which had family worship as a special focus. As its *raison d'etre*, it cited both the China Continuation Committee's resolution and the US Congress's designation of the second

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[69] Joseph F. Smith, Anthon H. Lund, and Charles W. Penrose, "Home Evening," *The Improvement Era* XVIII.8 (June 1915), 733-4.
[70] C.Y. Cheng, "The Chinese Church in 1916," *China Mission Yearbook 1917 (Eighth Annual Issue),* edited by E.C. Lobenstine (Shanghai, Christian Literature Society for China, 1917), 291-2.

Sunday in May as Mother's Day. "Inasmuch as the purposes of 'Mother's Day' are somewhat similar to those for a 'Home Sunday,' the China Sunday School Union suggests to the Sunday Schools of China the use of Mother's Day, May 12th, as a special 'Home Sunday,' and the week preceding Mother's Day, viz., May 6-12 as 'Home Welfare Week.'"[71] A lesson about family worship was included as an alternative to the regularly scheduled Sunday School Class. A "Children's Life-problem and Parable-story" introduced the idea of family worship with a clear description and a ham-fisted promotion: "A boy returning from a visit to a friend's home, said to his father one morning, 'In my friend's home we had a fine time before breakfast each morning. All the family sat about a table, each with a Bible before him. The father, standing at the side, selected and began to read a Bible story. Then all read a verse in order. The father then led in prayer, followed by all repeating the Lord's Prayer. Morning prayers ended with a song in which all joined. Can we not have Family Prayers in our home, father?" Following this endorsement, the lesson outline included eight topics for discussion, most coupled with selections of scriptures: "The times when a good Jew taught his children the Bible," "Some ways of teaching," "The home of Timothy," "The value of Bible Study," "Some homes you know where the Bible is read and studied," "Family prayer," "Some homes where there is family prayer," and "The home of Jesus."[72]

The Chinese Sunday School Home Day program took many cues from the Sunday School Home Department, which certainly fed and likely was influenced by the more

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[71] "Editorial," *The China Sunday School Journal* VI.5 (May 1918), 996.
[72] "Sunday School Lesson Notes for May 1918," *China Sunday School Journal* VI.3 (March 1918), vii-viii. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924079418749;view=1up;seq=509.

general concerns about the Family Altar. The *China Sunday School Journal* reprinted part of an article on the Home Department written by Flora Stebbins for the "Sunday School Encyclopedia," which included a discussion of pledge cards. The China Sunday School Union promoted this practice as well, by reprinting Stebbins' description of the cards and how they were used.[73] Stebbins described a change that had taken place under a sense of increased urgency in promotion of the family altar: the division of Home Department work into two "Grades." A Grade B member fulfilled the regular requirements of reading the lesson for a half hour each week, but if one added to this "the advance step of family worship in the home, including at least the reading of the Bible and prayer," one could become a Grade A member of the Home Department![74] Explaining this change, Stebbins wrote:

> That great good has been done by the Home Department is unquestioned, but it has been done largely along individual lines. It is believed that far greater results may be obtained by working with entire families rather than with one or more individuals in a family. The primacy of the home should be recognized; the whole social progress should center in the home, and the home teaching should include everything that influences the character and conduct of the entire family. The Bible is the only adequate textbook. It is estimated that in only eight per cent of the Christian homes in America is the Bible used as a family textbook. The old time family altar is fast becoming obsolete, and diversity rather than unity of interests affects family life adversely. The church, which is seeking some definite means of establishing or reestablishing the family altar, to help each father to be the priest unto his own household, to raise the whole standard of family life, will welcome the result which 'Grade A' will bring if they are used.[75]

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[73] Stebbins, "The Home Department of the Sunday School," 1000.
[74] Ibid., 1001.
[75] Ibid., 1001-2.

Appealing to a vision of patriarchal Biblical religious order, family altar movements may have in part been an effort to reestablish male leadership in the home. Notice Stebbins' emphasis on the importance of the father ("the priest unto his own household") in the family altar ideal. One historian of American fundamentalist Christianity notes that the "machismo posturings" of Billy Sunday and others is a response to the deeply entrenched "Victorian myth of feminine superiority."[76] In supporting patriarchy, proponents of the family altar may have found some common cause with those pushing for greater acceptance of ancestor worship (if they could get past the theological flexibility and implications for an open canon).

A Western Reverend serving in China drew the connection between Judeo-Christian family patriarchy and the Chinese family system in his article, "The Family Altar," which followed Stebbins' in the *Chinese Sunday School Journal.* Applying the principle of the family altar to the work of missionaries in China, Reverend Junkin wrote with reverence about the Christian home and the potential power of the family altar:

> We think of that most beautiful fruit of Christian civilization, the Christian Home, we realize something of its tremendous power in our Western lands, and we long for the day when this great land of China shall know its forming, transforming, and compelling force.
>
> Then in this country where so much centers about the family and the clan, can we neglect to press the importance of family religion, of daily religious instruction in the family, of family worship if you please, the old fashioned *family altar?*

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[76] Balmer, "The Ideal of Femininity," 53.

To help set the standard and encourage the vision in China, Junkin advertised a special Family Altar Certificate (see figure 4.4). Available at an affordable price, this certificate was to be signed by participants (in the presence of a pastor, signaling the seriousness of the commitment) and hung on the wall of the home as a sign of their successful fulfillment of its pledge. Listed at the base of the pledge is the promise: "Family Worship Pledge 1. Each day, morning and evening, at a definite time. 2. Relatives, friends, and servants in the home all to join. 3. Those who can, should read verses from the Bible, all join in the prayer. If none can read, all should pray."[77] This pledge communicated an expectation of full participation by all family members.

[77] Translation of the pledge surrounded the pledge figure itself on the back cover of the magazine. "'Family Altar' Certificate," *China Sunday School Journal* VI.5 (May 1918), back cover.

Blessed is the Family that observes Family Prayers.

Put it ALWAYS into Practice

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24: 15.

CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THIS HOUSE

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house.
Acts 16: 31.

"To you is the promise and to your children."
Acts 2: 39.

"And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thy house, and upon thy gates."
Deut. 6: 7-9

"Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

Family Worship Pledge

1. Each day, morning and evening, at a definite time.
2. Relatives, friends, and servants in the home all to join.
3. Those who can, should read verses from the Bible, all join in the prayer. If none can read, all should pray.

"Thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house." Acts 11: 14.

"Family Altar" Certificate. (See infra page 1002).

Figure 4.4: "Family Altar" Certificate

Western male pastors like Reverend Junkin tried to promte a focus on reforming the Christian family in China, a work that gained an institutional home when the NCC formed. At the formative conference of the NCC in 1922, the family came up in multiple contexts. A Commission on the Future Task of the Church wrote that religious education had three main sites at which it ought to be carried out: the church, the school, and the home. The Commission urged that several aspects of Sunday School education be employed widely going forward, including the use of cradle rolls, the Home Department, and Home Sundays.[78]

A Christian home was more than the sum of its Christian members. It was a different kind of entity altogether. Prior to the creation of the NCC, the China for Christ movement (*Zhonghua guizhu*) included a vision of the ideal Christian home "essentially Christian in all family relationships, a training school in Christian virtues, a center of Christian intercourse and social service." In an address that brought the quest to establish the Christian Home in China into the new NCC, Mrs. H.C. Mei began her discussion by suggesting, "Let us first see what the average Christian home of today is like, and how it compares with that ideal home made the objective by the China-for-Christ Movement."[79] This distinction between the home inhabited by Christians and the ideal Christian home was a source of focus in the Christianize the Home Movement going forward.

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[78] Commission II, "The Future Task of the Church," in Rawlinson et al, eds., *The Chinese Church as Revealed in the National Christian Conference,* 256. By 1929, Guan Cuizhen would note a lack of interest in the Sunday School during her investigation into the churches' women and family work in thirteen cities and towns across eastern and southern China. *ZQJX diqi jie nianhui baogao,* 49-51. This is also the point at which Guan's work with the Christianize the Home Committee really took off, a fact possibly linked with the felt need to do something different from the established Sunday School practices to promote family spirituality in China.

[79] Mei, "Making the Home Christian," 475.

The difference between a home of Christians and a Christian home might be made analogous to old adages differentiating house from home. The former is a mere structure, the latter a place of emotional attachment, safety, warmth. One Christian writer referred to the difference between house and home as being distinguishable like an aroma: "Some breathe an air of sordidness and wrangling; in others we note the innumerable little attentions and courtesies and clusters of thoughtfulness that make what we call the 'sweet home.'"[80] Similarly, writers in the early- to mid-nineteenth century West distinguished "the true woman" by her taking up of certain gendered, morally laden tasks and characteristics.[81] Just so the home, if it were to be a real Christian home, had to have a certain moral and spiritual quality about it, a difference that was significant, if sometimes subtle; Mrs. Mei pointed out in her address that in domestic routine, customs, and physical organization, one might find the Christian home indistinguishable from a non-Christian home.[82]

The subtle difference between a Christian home and a non-Christian home was something, it seems, that one knew when one saw it. Many used the metaphor of scent. The author who distinguished the "air of sordidness and wrangling" from the sweet smell of home went on to say: "But the sweet incense of the memorable spot to most of us is the Family Altar. Nothing glorifies the home life like that. It is the very perfume of the place."[83] In 1920, the author of a pamphlet called *The Family Altar* wrote: "There is something in the atmosphere of a prayer-consecrated household, incapable of analysis or

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[80] MacLeod, "The Perfume of the Home."
[81] Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood."
[82] Mei, "Making the Home Christian," 475.
[83] MacLeod, "The Perfume of the Home."

definition, but as clearly appreciable as a change of temperature. We have been in homes where the incense of that morning sacrifice seemed to diffuse itself through the entire day, and where the odor of countless offerings appeared to linger in every chamber, and to have been breathed into every department of household duty."[84] Another author describes a metaphorical field of tall grasses fresh with a beautiful aroma though no flower is in sight; only when one bends to part the grasses can the flowers that cluster around their roots seen. "There are homes in which there is nothing remarkable in the way of grandeur or elegance, yet the very atmosphere as you enter is filled with sweetness, like 'the smell of a field which the Lord hath blessed.' It is the aroma of love, the love of Christ shed abroad in human hearts. Religion is lived there. The daily prayers bring down the spirit of heaven." Such a home was an ideal garden in which Christian character could be grown. "Those who grow up in truly Christian homes," wrote the same author, "imbibing in their souls from infancy the very life of Christ, will be strong to overcome every obstacle and resist every temptation."[85]

Of course the benefits of the Christian home went beyond developing personal spiritual strength. In a 1924 discussion at the annual meeting of the NCC, Pastor You Shuxun gave a speech in which he said: "The home is where citizens are modeled. If we want the product to be good, we need the models to be very good; the heroes that will save the nation and the traitors who will allow the nation to be conquered are all produced in families."[86] Strong Christian families would help produce a strong nation.

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[84] Marvin R. Vincent, *The Family Altar* (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Board of Publication and Sabbath-school Work, 1920), 9.
[85] Miller, *The Home Beautiful*, 189.
[86] *ZQJX di'er jie nianhui baogao*, 148.

Often, though, the arena of concern was closer to home. Family could become the foundation of a strong church. Mrs. Mei argued that “in the state of flux in which Chinese society today finds itself, when every wind of doctrine threatens to sweep aside age-old sanctions and institutions, when the swift currents of modern thought are loosening spiritual moorings, it is *the real Christian homes* that are proving a steadying force to many people.”[87] When in the Home Committee’s discussion in 1924 Mu Zuolin argued that the church was a more important field of labor than the family (after all, Jesus had left family life and taught his disciples to do the same), Gong Ziyun responded pragmatically, “you often see the sons and younger brothers of those who work for the church, and not only do they not serve the Lord, they are even worse than outsiders. So this question of family is more urgent than China for Christ. Family worship is the thing that we should do our utmost to promote now.”[88] Pursuing the strength of the church above the family was counterproductive when Christians’ family problems were damaging the church’s credibility.

Finding appropriate models of truly Christian homes and families was a concern from early on in the NCC’s movement. Gong Ziyun’s statement about the wayward families of church workers echoed a statement by Pastor Ren Naicheng early in the same 1924 meeting. Reng, who pointed out that a good family will have a positive influence on church, society, and nation, queried, “If pastors and evangelists do not themselves have a Christianized family, how can they help church members’ families to be

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[87] Mei, “Making the Home Christian,” 475. Emphasis added.
[88] *ZQJX di’er jie nianhui baogao*, 147-8.

Christianized?”[89] The problem of pastors with unsuitable family lives led, twelve years later, to documented efforts in some areas to increase religious education for pastors’ wives, helping them to recognize their responsibilities to their husbands’ work.[90]

In spite of it being something “incapable of analysis or definition,” Christian leaders in the early twentieth century knew how the sweet aroma of the Christian home was produced: regular family worship (*jiating libai*). The expected this worship to take a form somewhat like what Reverend Junkin alluded to – prayer, scripture reading, a hymn, perhaps a choral repetition of the Lord’s Prayer. In the US, books like *The Daily Altar: An Aid to Private Devotion & Family Worship* provided day-by-day programs families could follow. Each day’s entry in *The Daily Altar* included a paragraph on the “theme for the day,” a verse of scripture, a verse of poetry (invariably written by one of the Euro-American great male poets), and a written prayer.[91] A book entitled *The Family Altar* published around 1905 provided a month’s worth of programs, providing for each day two or three verses of scripture, a hymn, and a lengthy written prayer.[92] *At Jesus’ Feet,* which boasted “A Simple Devotion for Each Day in the Year,” used a format aimed at holding the attention of little children. A brief reading from the Bible was paired with a lengthy explanation in homey, accessible prose meant to be read or imitated. A short prayer and hymn finished off the daily ritual.[93]

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[89] *ZQJX di’er jie nianhui baogao*, 147.
[90] *ZQJX Jiduhua jiating weiyuanhui diyi jie nianhui baogao*, 6.
[91] Herbert L. Willett and Charles Clayton Morrison, *The Daily Altar: An Aid to Private Devotion & Family Worship* (Chicago, IL: The Christian Century Press, 1919). Reprinted in Escondido, California: Sacred Fire Publications, 2000.
[92] *The Family Altar* (Richmond, VA: Executive Committee of Publication, Presbyterian Church, (1905?)).
[93] Edward W. Schramm, ed. *At Jesus’ Feet: A Book for the Family Altar Containing a Simple Devotion for Each Day in the Year* (Lutheran Book Concern, The Wartburg Press, 1936; Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961).

Family worship was not meant to be something that happened to family members, but something in which all participated. Some authors, like Junkin, pushed for full participation from all family members as expressed by the little boy who returned from a visit so enthralled with family worship. In a description of a spiritually deficient family worship, one writer describes a hasty father dashing off a Bible reading and prayer before leaving for work, his family left wondering what hit them.[94] One American book, *The Home Beautiful,* set the standard that all should be involved, not just the father, and that the format ought to be appealing and enjoyable for even small children.[95] These democratizing, inclusive expectations resonate with Christian desires to elevate the standing of women and children in China.[96]

While many of the concepts tied up in American family altar literature were reflected in the Home Committee's promotion of family worship in China, it is probably not surprising that the term "the family altar" was not frequently used there. The term "family altar" in China was liable to bring to mind the very literal altars in many non-Christian homes in the early twentieth century, where Buddhist and Daoist deities and a family's ancestors might be worshipped. As discussed in the previous two chapters of this dissertation, ambivalence over ancestor worship ran deeply through the Christian community. In fact, Cheng Jingyi did write a book with the title "Family Altar" (*jiating jitan*) which was categorized under "Reference Books" in a list of Home Week materials.

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[94] Vincent, *The Family Altar*, 14-15.
[95] Miller, *The Home Beautiful*, 177-93.
[96] On the uplift of women as a goal of Protestant missionary efforts, see Ryan Dunch, "'Mothers to Our Country'" 325-6.

In spite of Cheng's prominence in the Christian community, just 1,500 out of the 5,000 printed copies of this book had sold at the time the inventory was taken.[97]

An "Index to a Survey of Current Christian Literature" requested by the China Continuation Committee and published in 1918 refers to a number of other topics used as metaphors for family spirituality (including "daily food," "food for the soul," "daily light," and "walking in the light") but made no mention of the family altar. In the accompanying list of English-language literature, only one title included a reference to the family (in this case, "household") altar. An inventory of "Printing and Sale of Home Week Materials" published in 1936, had just one out of fifty items with a title referring to the family altar. Both the 1918 and 1936 lists included titles on the Christian Home, worship, hygiene, and various topics relating particularly to parenting and raising children. Whether the potential for confusion about ancestral worship was the reason that family altar language was not used cannot be ascertained definitively, but the titles listed do tell us some things. They affirm that the Christian home was a powerful concept, and worship as a family was considered important, for one. But also, titles from both lists affirm a focus on parent education and parental responsibility to learn the skills and methods to properly raise children.[98]

Many of the writings on the Christian family and family spirituality placed a great emphasis is on personality. In the early twentieth century Protestant usage, the term

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[97] *Jiduhua jiating yundong zhou cailiao yingshua ji xiaoshou shumudan*, 3.

[98] G.A. Clayton, "The Home, Family Worship and Daily Bible Readings. Advance copy from the 'Index to a Survey of Current Christian Literature,'" *China Sunday School Journal* VI.5 (May 1918), 1007-11; Mary E. Moxcey, "Religious Nurture in the Home – a Brief Bibliography." *China Sunday School Journal* VI.5 (May 1918), 1012-1012(d).; *Jiduhua jiating yundong zhou cailiao yingshua ji xiaoshou shumudan.*

personality (*renge*) emphasized individuality as contrasted with one's position in the family. Personality was something that ought to be nurtured for a healthy psychological, social, and spiritual life. Christians described respect and even reverence for personality as an important part of what Christianity had to offer Chinese society, where (as they described it) children were often completely subordinated to overpowering family hierarchy.[99] Logically, servants were also often brought up as deserving better treatment within Christian homes.

Developing children's personalities or character was a central responsibility of parenthood.[100] Many Christians pushed against the straw man of patriarchal Confucianism that was held up by the New Culture and May Fourth Movements. As discussed in chapter two of this dissertation, iconoclasts like Wu Yu criticized the patriarchal system for setting up filial piety and benevolence as complementary virtues, then only enforcing filial piety. Some Christians agreed with Wu's assessment. Recall that Dr. Shi Meiyu wrote in 1922, "The Chinese have always emphasized the virtue of filial piety. This we think has been pushed to the extreme; the children and younger generations have nothing to say."[101]

Christianity, as lived in the Christian Home, could right the wrong that reformers blamed on the excessive valuation of filial piety. One pastor, Xu Shengyan, argued on the contrary that Christ's guiding truth for families was "benevolence, equality, freedom,

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[99] *National Christian Council Annual Report 1923-4*, 66; Commission II, "The Future Task of the Church," in Rawlinson et al, eds., *The Chinese Church as Revealed in the National Christian Conference,* 261.
[100] *ZQJX di'er jie nianhui baogao,* 147-8; *National Christian Council Annual Report 1923-4*, 66-7; *ZQJX disan jie nianhui baogao*, 55.
[101] Mary Stone (Shi Meiyu), "Present Problems in the Home," 472.

etc." Reversing the Confucian caricature that only emphasized filial piety, Xu wrote, "Christians' families are bound together by Christian benevolence; parents give benevolence (*ren'ai*) to children, and children give Christian benevolence to their parents. And from parents to brothers and sisters, there is no exception, all are the same."[102] In Xu's vision of family love, the problems of overwhelming patriarchy are overcome by Christian love, which maps well onto Confucian benevolence. This vision is met by the sense, frequently found in the parenting literature of this period, that scientific methods of parenting could enable parents to fulfil their responsibilities to children. Better, stronger children could be raised by parents with an understanding of psychology and a sense of their own moral obligation to their children. It was parents' responsibilities to children, not the reverse, that ought to be emphasized now.

This chapter has shown how strands of thought surrounding Christian family came to China with missionaries. Among the most important ideals thus imported were notions of home as a potentially transformative spiritual center, women as specially designated moral influences in the home, and daily family worship as a key to the Christian home's strength and proper character-building function. These principles, intentionally or not, became a replacement ideal for Chinese Christian family spirituality. Focus on a new model seems to have drowned out concerns with incorporating fraught religious practices like ancestor worship.

Christianized families, families that worshiped together and sought to fill their home with Christian love, were the families that could heal the ills of Chinese society.

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[102] *ZQJX di'er jie nianhui baogao,* 149.

The burden to be taken up and the deficiencies to be filled fell mostly to women. In spite of that, a rhetoric of gender equality prevailed. Mrs. Mei's 1922 address set out the principal of equality in domestic relationships, emphasizing that cooperation and understanding between husband and wife was required in spiritual matters. When she discussed the lack of such cooperation, the blame was shared: men were often too caught up in "business and other worldly interest" to make sufficient contributions to home spirituality, while the women lacked both education and initiative for the task. For Mei, this point did not denigrate women. On the contrary, it highlighted ways that women were being let down by their society. Mei examined the statistics on education in the *Christian Occupation of China* report just published that year, and she found that women's opportunities for education, including religious education, was extremely low. "Is it cause for wonder that the standard of education in Christian homes is low?" She queried. In spiritual development, she found the structural deficiencies equally glaring; the church has failed to train and enlist women. "The church's failure to do these things in the past has retarded its growth, has made Christianity for many women an empty form, leaving very little impress upon the home. While the women unquestionably need the Church, the Church needs the women still more, and in every progressive church the women's worth has been more than proved."[103] Mei envisioned a church that relied on women who were qualified for responsibility, women capable of shaping their homes and their society. Such women needed training from the church and opportunities to serve within it.

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[103] Mei, "Making the Home Christian," 476-7.

The Christianize the Home Movement provided models of the type of woman who could train a women to transform her home into a Christian home and exert moral influence on her family members, as was her responsibility.[104] The next chapter examines some of the model women and model families that the Christianize the Home Committee propagated. In those models we see, in addition to ideals of family worship and spirituality, an ambivalence about Chinese culture and the patriarchal family that will reflect and amplify the theme of the first half of this chapter. Throughout the 1930s, the Chinese church remained far from unanimous in its approach to Confucianism and patriarchy. Forces pushing for the integration of Confucian culture with Christianity were themselves tied up with modernizing, rationalizing influences. Christians seeking an ideal family form to strive for had to wrestle with complex priorities, weighing the preservation of Chinese culture and its ties to ingrained patriarchy, the uplift of women, and the child-centric values of parent education.

[104] Robert, "The 'Christian Home,'" 140.

Chapter Five – Managing to be Christian Families: Model Mothers and the Puzzle of Patriarchy

In the previous chapter, I showed a form of Christian family spirituality that entered China with western female missionaries: the ideology of the Christian home as a sacred space, centered on a (usually metaphorical) family altar. Once this ideal traveled to China, the metaphor of the altar – a central object that drew the family together in worship – fell out of use and emphasis was placed instead on the practice of "family worship," with the ideal of full participation by all. In this chapter, I analyze two pieces of literature published for a 1930s Chinese audience that have not been analyzed previously. These two fictional accounts – one a play, and one a series of novels – provide models of Chinese Christian families, families for whom Christianity is a transformational conservatism. In the two families portrayed, aspects of the extended family structure and filial piety are preserved, while women's authority in the family, church, and society is expanded through literacy and education.

Western female missionaries to China came as emissaries of Victorian American home ideals, whether that role fueled or simply justified their urges to lead and influence others as missionaries.[1] As historian Dana Robert has documented, this focus on the spiritual importance of domesticity dates to very early in the Protestant missionary effort; she quotes Rufus Anderson of the American Board, as saying in 1836 that "'the character of society is formed in the family.'" Because of the family's importance for society,

[1] Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, 37-8.

Anderson argued, native people ("the heathens") should be given models; they should be given the opportunity to observe missionary homes and families, who could act as "object lessons."[2] Historian of Korean Christianity Hyaeweol Choi examines the impact of this domestic focus and finds that missionaries consciously "used their homes as models to illustrate the virtues of a Christian household."[3] Of women missionaries in China, Jane Hunter wrote: "Their special concern with the details of domestic life made them both the most dedicated and the most successful emissaries of an entire civilization. As one of the celebrants of the missionary enterprise put it, 'Every home they set up, every school they establish, is an object lesson in the art of living.'"[4] This chapter analyzes two of the models that were offered to Chinese women through Christian literature produced in the 1930s.

The need for models seemed obvious to missionaries who saw their host cultures they came to as benighted and who therefore were sometimes blind to any heritage of strength in the domestic sphere. Sometimes native homes were seen as threats, as by late nineteenth-century Canada Presbyterian Church missionaries to central India, who created schools for the daughters of converts in order to provide some distance from the "uncivilized" influence of their homes.[5] A 1918 volume called *Women Workers of the Orient* taught that the Christian home was an example that could be "'set in the midst of

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[2] Quoted in Robert, "The 'Christian Home,'" 134, 143.
[3] Hyaeweol Choi, "The Missionary Home as a Pulpit: Domestic Paradoxes in Early Twentieth-Century Korea," in Hyaeweol Choi and Margaret Jolly, eds., *Divine Domesticities*, 32.
[4] Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility,* xvi.
[5] Ruth Compton Brouwer, "Opening Doors Through Social Service: Aspects of Women's work in the Canadian Presbyterian Mission in Central India, 1877-1914," in Leslie A. Flemming, ed., *Women's Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*. San Francisco, CA: Westview Press, 1989, 17.

people to whom home life, in any true sense of the word, has been unknown.'"[6] One missionary to Korea wrote in 1908 that "'we say that a Korean woman has no home, only a house.'"[7] Part of the trouble missionaries had recognizing an ideology of home in Korea may have been tied to the Confucian multi-generational family structure, which contrasted with American and Christian visions of a small nuclear family centered on the married couple. One missionary to Korea wrote in 1905 that the Korean language really contained no term for "home." This remarkable assertion, Choi argues, may have been based at least in part on the fact that the Korean term for a woman marrying refers to her going to her mother-in-law's house (as opposed to creating her own domestic unit).[8] The Christian home, in contrast, was envisioned as the creation of a married couple, not a large extended family.

A perhaps unfortunate paradox about the work of women in the church was the fact that mothers in the trenches of their own domestic duties generally lacked the time and energy to take their principles beyond the walls of their own homes. Because of this, single women missionaries were sought more than married women, and became a mainstay of female religious work in China; despite all the best intentions of married women and their husbands, once a woman had children (and sometimes even before), domestic ties and duties took a considerable toll on her ability to contribute meaningfully to religious work outside her home. Perhaps the sense of helplessness and disappointment described by Hunter led frustrated missionary wives and mothers to embrace the notion

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[6] Quoted in Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, 115.
[7] Quoted in Choi, "The Missionary Home as a Pulpit," 31.
[8] Ibid., 37.

that their homes exerted a passive influence on those around them while they cared for their children and managed their households. Many missionaries experienced their failure to feel satisfaction in their domestic work and their failure to escape it so as to participate more fully in mission work as signs of their own personal failings; they had come to China under an ideology of feminine sacrifice and felt weighed down both by the sacrifice required by their domestic roles and by the fact that they had difficulty enjoying it. Meanwhile, those who did have frequent opportunities to contribute to church work and social work for women, who were responsible for spreading the ideal of the Christian home, were often those who were themselves unfettered by the responsibilities of spouses and offspring.[9]

The problem of housework was a barrier to actualizing ideals about the permeating influence of missionary homes, and it was tied up with the cultural divisions between Western missionaries and Chinese. Hunter describes many missionary women who were willing to leave their country to participate in the sometimes lonely missionary cause, but who nonetheless felt compelled to create an American childhood experience for their offspring. They found the conditions in China to be a detriment to that project, and sometimes sought to limit their children's contact with Chinese people, practicing a "defensive domesticity" that kept the surrounding community at arm's distance.[10]

As discussed in the third chapter of this dissertation, some missionaries experienced increasing openness to and engagement with their Eastern host cultures, including a greater appreciation of Chinese home and family traditions. Pearl Buck, for

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[9] These phenomena are laid out beautifully in chapters 2 through 4 of Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*.
[10] Ibid., 112.

instance, criticized missionaries who were blind to the family values of the Chinese when she wrote that they failed "'to ask themselves whether or not the Chinese had a sort of home life which was perhaps as valuable in its way as ours, or at least better suited to China than ours was.'"[11] Robert provides a rough chronology for a shift in Christian Home object lessons; at first the missionary home was seen as the model, but after the creation of girls' schools, converts' homes filled that function. Robert also notes some authors who showed greater sensitivity to the strengths of non-Western cultures. In 1920, the author of *The Home With the Open Door* wrote that a "'missionary wife must study her context and learn how to uplift home life without imposing Western Civilisation.'" This author also advocated that homemakers adapt domestic principles, rather than simply imitate what they saw in missionary homes.[12]

While Hunter, Robert, Choi, and many others have pointed out the importance of female missionary work and the centrality of their push for domestic conversion within the broader missionary project, there is still much research to be done on the ways that Chinese women adapted and applied these teachings. The study of Chinese Christian home models can provide testing ground for the narrative that missionary homes were effective object lessons on Christian family, a perspective I believe to be based on missionary rhetoric (and presumptions of cultural superiority) but not shared by Chinese women.

Throughout this dissertation, I have emphasized the transnational quality of the National Christian Council, pointing out that missionaries were listening to their Chinese

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[11] Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, 116.
[12] Robert, "The 'Christian Home,'" 160.

colleagues and that the leadership sought to respond to popular desires and opinion and shifted their approaches to their work in response to critiques of cultural imperialism. It is important to acknowledge that Chinese women and men joined their Western colleagues in the active promotion of shared causes, but that Chinese and Western participants had different viewpoints and experiences within the NCC is evidenced in the responses to a survey sent in the mid- to late-1930s to both missionaries (presumably female) and Chinese Christian women who had been educated in Christian schools. The survey included a question about how the missionary home exerted influence. Responses showed that missionaries thought that their homes were important as passive examples to the Chinese; their Chinese sisters, on the other hand, found teaching, preaching, and education work on the home more helpful.

The same survey asked how missionary homes and lives had fallen short, eliciting telling responses that revealed that a sense of separation and racial superiority sometimes marred interactions with Chinese women in missionary homes and prevented the desired sense of slow-working spiritual influence that missionaries hoped to exert.[13] The very notion of the female missionary as having a civilizing influence on the women and homes of the host culture could create barriers. Choi's chapter on the missionary home's functionality as a pulpit in Korea indicates that missionaries' negative biases toward native women were not the only cultural boundaries to spiritual communication; one Western missionary wrote that Korean women were often fascinated by the paraphernalia of the western households they entered. She indicated that missionaries were glad to have

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[13] Emma Bailey Speer and Constance M. Hallock, eds., *Christian Home Making* (New York: Round Table Press, 1939), 71, 74.

"sightseeing" tours for local women, but they found that during such visits, their attempts to discuss religion were often stymied by the visitors' interruptive questions about the missionary's age or family structure.[14] As Hunter puts it, "The American home did not work as a missionary force in China because the subtle emanations of domesticity could not cross the vast cultural chasm between East and West."[15] While I believe Hunter was right about the failure of the American home as a model, this chapter will show that "subtle emanations of domesticity" did indeed cross cultural chasms, sometimes through the teaching, preaching, and education programs coordinated by the Home Committee. This chapter uses two previously unstudied Chinese sources to show how a Chinese and a Western author, respectively, adapted Western ideals of domesticity to create Chinese models for Christian family life.

From Morning Till Night

Historian Helen Schneider has written a history of the development of home economics programs and curricula in China, in which she points out that many of the women involved in church and social work for women and children were products of the new home economics departments, college graduates (and sometimes holders of advanced degrees) with expertise in scientific home management and family skills whose qualifications in domestic matters enabled them to lead and educate far beyond their own homes.[16] Li Guanfang and Guan Cuizhen, both secretaries of the National Christian

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[14] Choi, "The Missionary Home as Pulpit," 32-3.
[15] Hunter, *The Gospel of Gentility*, 116.
[16] Schneider, *Keeping the Nation's House*.

Council's Christianize the Home Movement, were among the ranks of women of expertise. Li wrote a play that provided an important model Chinese Christian family, a play that is instructive about the blending of spiritual and secular approaches to the home.

Studies of Christianity in China often focus on either spiritual, ecclesiastical matters or Social Gospel, secular aspects of the religion's growth. Modern home economics, education, and social services, for instance, are often studied separately from spirituality. Where the Christian home is discussed, its touted spiritual power is relatively unexamined. This chapter tries to look Christian family spirituality in China full in the face. In the writings and meeting notes of the Christianize the Home movement, topics that could be clearly marked "spiritual" often arise intermingled with the clearly "secular" topics. A whole body of issues and questions surrounding family relationships bridge the spiritual-secular divide. In short, at least in reference to the Christianize the Home Movement, using a methodology that divides evangelistic and civilizing models of missionary work would be highly problematic.[17] This movement gives us much to discuss in terms of cultural exchange and hybridity. Examining Christian spirituality in the home may also show us how the ground was laid for the home churches that became such an important component of Chinese Christianity after the Chinese government tightened down on religious oversight in the early 1950s.

Li Guanfang was on the Home Committee by 1928. She was loaned by the Guangxuehui (Christian Literature Society) to provide the Home Committee with help in

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[17] Brouwer refers to Torben Christensen and William R. Hutchison's use of an "'evangelization vs. civilization'" model for analyzing missionary work during "the period of high imperialism." Brouwer, "Opening Doors Through Social Service," 11.

publication and dissemination of home literature during the time when the Home Committee's secretary, Guan Cuizhen, pursued higher education in the United States (1932-4).[18] Sometime between 1930 and 1935, Li published a play for the Home Committee, called *From Morning Till Night* (*Cong zao dao wan*). Li, who was asked by Guan Cuizhen to write the play after the originally intended author's health problems prevented her from doing it, downplayed her own qualification, citing her own lack of children (and talent).[19] Nevertheless, her play was popular enough to merit a second edition, selling 11,270 copies by the time of inventorying in 1936.[20] With so many copies sold, we can assume a side readership.

The title of Li's play is *Cong zao dao wan,* translated on the inventory of Home Week materials as *From Morning Till Night.* The phrase "cong zao dao wan" is elsewhere less romantically rendered "a day in the life," which evokes just the type of gentle, decent voyeurism that the play provides. Li makes a point in her preface of distinguishing this play from depictions of great dramatic events, like the martyrdom of early Christians in Rome, or the slayings of Christians during the Boxer uprising of 1900. Her play is meant to be closer to home, even to break the fourth wall in some ways. Li wanted the play to make audience members feel certain things, like the presence of Christ in daily life, and to be able to take away certain things, like ideas for home management, décor, or the improvement of family relationships.

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[18] *ZQJX dijiu jie dahui baogao*, 44-5; C.L. Boynton, "The Work of the Home Committee" (Shanghai: National Christian Council, February 1937), 2. SMA: Q579-4-138.

[19] Li Guanfang, "Xiao yin," [A Little Preface], *Cong zao dao wan* [From Morning Till Night]. Shanghai: Guangxuehui [CLS], 1930, 4. The only copy of this play I was able to procure was missing its cover, so I have no publication information. However, it was listed in an inventory of Home Week Materials, with publication information. ZQJX Jiduhua jiating weiyuanhui, *Jiduhua jiating yundong kanwu mulu*, 3.

[20] ZQJX Jiduhua jiating weiyuanhui, *Jiduhua jiating yundong kanwu mulu*, 2.

The contrast with life-and-death events of historical import sets Li's story apart from accounts of events occurring in male realms, in which politics and empires figure prominently. The contrast invites us to view her play as a *nei,* or interior, story, a story where the defining action is the functioning of the family, which is a manifestation of morality.[21] As Susan Mann has pointed out, the *nei* designation of women's lives and the home's space in China is different from the American notion of a private domain, sacred in its protective separation from the public. In China, the home is the state in microcosm, and the morality taught and enacted there is intimately connected to the proper ordering and functioning of society as a whole.[22] We can discern this connection in the language of the play's characters at points, but Li also made it explicit in her written introduction to the play. She wrote: "the Christian outlook on life is not to withdraw from worldly affairs, it is to enter the world. So I not only talk about people's relationship with God, I also pay attention to peoples' relationships with each other, like the old being benevolent and the young filial, love between husband and wife, and so on; these things are as indispensable to a family as food."[23] Li has quietly affirmed a connection between familial connections and worldly affairs, a connection that, as Susan Glosser has shown convincingly, remained through decades of family reform and revolution.[24]

The play centers on a family surnamed Zhang. The list of characters and the description of the stage setting reveal the Zhang family's demographic status. They are educated people living in Beijing, the husband a middle school provost, the wife a college

[21] Li Guanfang, "Xiao yin," in *Cong zao dao wan,* 1-4.
[22] Discussed in Glosser, *Chinese Visions of Family and State,* 4.
[23] Li Guanfang, "Xiao yin," in *Cong zao dao wan,* 2.
[24] Glosser, *Chinese Visions of Family and State*.

graduate, the husband's sister a medical student. They are urban dwellers, living in Beijing. They are well enough to do to enjoy many of the trappings of an aesthetic modernity, including religious and non-religious pictures and calligraphy on the walls, family photographs, flower vases, ornamental pieces of furniture, a makeup table. Perhaps most telling, the Zhang family home has a layout that seems to differ significantly from the extended family homes found in the hutongs of Beijing.[25]

In *China's Living Houses,* Ronald Knapp describes the Chinese courtyard house as "a 'living symbol' endowed with meaning and resulting from conscious action." The houses structured the lives and families of their inhabitants by delineating and reinforcing a hierarchy based on age and seniority: the innermost dwelling is reserved for the parents, and the first son and his wife live on the left side of that courtyard. The next courtyard's side rooms are for children, so that the more senior one is, the farther to the interior, one's dwelling space is, and the more privacy one gets. Sometimes a literal step up marked the shift from one courtyard to the next, reinforcing the family hierarchy in an experiential way.[26] The Zhang family of Li Guanfang's play lives in a very different structure. The constraints of the stage prevent us from getting a sense of the actual layout of the family home, but we can draw some conclusions about the symbolism of the home's layout based on what we have. In the first scene, two bedrooms are visible, to the left and right of the stage; the parents sleep in one, the children in the other. Bedrooms for the other adults in the household – Mr. Zhang's mother and younger sister – are not pictured.

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[25] Li Guanfang, *Cong Zao Dao Wan*, 1-5.
[26] Ronald G. Knapp, *China's Living Houses: Folk Beliefs, Symbols, and Household Ornamentation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 2, 10-11.

Immediately the central relationships of the Christian family are made clear: it is the nuclear family that matters most here, and the grandmother and aunt are appendages to it. The second scene opens into the dining room, and the third takes place outside the next-door-neighbor's gate and in the Zhang family's drawing room. Here, the public places of the home are shared by the whole family, including servants and neighbors. No one fears to enter these central spaces because they are the spaces in which all live and work. The one exception to that is when the evening family worship service is being held; then the servants, Lao Wang and Wei Ma, enter quietly. Their attitudes are meant to indicate reverence, and it is significant that even in this sacred family moment, they are expected to enter as participants.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves – we have jumped to the evening! Let us begin at the beginning and watch the Zhang family's day unfold in its proper order. The day begins with Mr. and Mrs. Zhang waking up in their bed. They exchange morning greetings and Mr. Zhang asks how Mrs. Zhang slept. She slept poorly; she is concerned about her four-year-old and the other neighborhood children who have no kindergarten to attend. Mrs. Zhang has an idea: she wants to start a kindergarten, and she asks her husband what he thinks. His response is, "Sounds great, I entirely approve. But don't overwork yourself." It is time to pray together as a couple, and Mr. Zhang tells her, her turn to pray. She thanks God for their rich relationship as husband and wife. From the beginning of the play, the audience is shown that the relationship between the parents is the core of this family, and that their shared approach to God is central to that relationship. A moment later a now fully-dressed Mr. Zhang wakes his three children and

leads them in a few minutes of calisthenics and deep breathing. The children are instructed to dress, a breakfast bell rings, and the scene ends.[27]

The next scene opens in the dining room as the breakfast bell rings (and we note the precision of the bell, which signals discipline and regularity, as well as performative simultaneity under which the scene change is rendered instantaneous). The author specifies in detail the family members' positions around the long table: father and mother take either end, with the mother-in-law seated by her son, and the sister-in-law by Mrs. Zhang. The children are seated by gender, with the girls closer to their mother and the boy closer to their father. At the table, they perform a perfect family worship, led by Mr. Zhang – they sing a song together, then recite the first Psalm and the Lord's Prayer. Now, the stage directions tell us, "Morning worship is complete," and they begin to eat.

Conversation naturally turns to the day's upcoming activities. It is Monday, Grandmother's day to visit the hospital. She asks the oldest daughter, twelve-year-old Ailing, if she has a gift for the patient called Liu Dama. Ailing does indeed – she has knitted a vest for Liu Dama. Her younger brother, Jianxun, is asked if he has something he would like to share with a patient at the hospital. He does not know any patients and thinks hard about what he can do, and what he is willing to do. His grandmother tries to make generosity more appealing by describing a young girl – a child bride – who has been burned in an accident while working for her new family. The playwright reminds the audience of the evils of young marriage, a theme of family reform work, criticizing a family that treats young girls as workers rather than daughters and puts them at risk. This

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[27] Li Guanfang, *Cong zao dao wan*, 1-7.

girl, who the adults call "Wu jiejie" (big sister Wu) and thus put in a metaphorical familial relationship with Jianxun, is staying in the hospital. Jianxun, who gets hung up on the idea of giving her his outgrown clothes, is finally prompted by his aunt to think more in the direction of the cookies and chocolates he has been given recently. Stage directions tell us that Jianxun "does not make a sound, seeming as if he cannot bear to give them up." When his grandmother asks, "Jianxun, don't you love Wu jiejie?" Jianxun replies honestly, "I love Wu jiejie, but I love chocolate candy more." Guided by gentle promptings from his parents and aunt, he decides that he can send *some* of his cookies and chocolates with Grandma to give to Wu jiejie. The family finishes their meal and sets off for the day.

The next few minutes of the play showcase Mrs. Zhang's household management. After her family has departed, Lao Wang the manservant enters. Again we are reminded that it is Monday; this family has a set schedule for all their activities, and today is the day for Lao Wang to work in the garden. Since there is little to be done in the flower garden, Lao Wang suggests that he pick the peaches and the fava beans. Mrs. Zhang adds tasks to his schedule – he will wash dishes, purchase meat, and then "you can quickly go pick the peaches." Mrs. Zhang is an efficient manager who expects hard work. Lao Wang, having received his orders, gets moving.

Wei Ma, the maidservant, enters next, carrying large laundry bags. Mrs. Zhang first asks if Wei Ma has done the tidying, then has her dump out the laundry bags so they can divide the work. Seven smaller bags emerge, filled with seven categories of laundry: sheets, pillowcases, outer gowns, underpants, socks, handkerchiefs, and pockets or bags. Mrs. Zhang divides the washing work between the two women by categories. Wei Ma

insists that Mrs. Zhang is taking too much of the washing herself, but Mrs. Zhang brushes off her concern and gives the servant further instructions for preparation of the midday meal, including fetching vegetables from the family garden. Wei Ma accepts her orders, assures Mrs. Zhang that she will wash the clothes quickly, and departs. Mrs. Zhang consults her budget and makes some calculations, then leaves the stage.

At this point the drama of the play – and the Zhang family's day – begins to unfold. Airen, the four-year-old daughter, whose name is a homonym for "beloved one" or "love and benevolence," wanders into the dining room and quickly makes a mess of impressive proportions. She breaks a vase and spills the water, then overturns a bottle of ink all over herself. Mrs. Zhang walks in, looks solemnly at Airen, and, scolding her for her naughtiness, declares, "Look at yourself. If you dirty your clothes this badly again, I don't want you to be my daughter. You will have to go out and beg for food." Noting that Airen is spreading the ink, she hurries the girl to her bedroom to help her change her clothes.[28]

In the third scene little Airen leaves the house with a basket full of rice bowls and a stick, which she is using as if she is a blind beggar. She walks to the neighbor's house and shouts "open the door!" Mrs. Xu, the matriarch next door, pokes her head out, and Airen asks her for some rice. Thinking that Airen's mother has sent her to borrow some rice, she obligingly fills Airen's bowl with rice and walks her home.

When they arrive at the Zhang family drawing room, Mrs. Zhang confused about what is going on, which of course confuses Mrs. Xu. Airen explains, "Mama told me to

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[28] Ibid., 7-22.

go beg for rice," and Mrs. Zhang makes the connection, laughs, and explains. Mrs. Xu responds with ideal warmth and courtesy: "So that's what happened. This little daughter of yours is sure lively! I've seen so many real beggars begging for rice, but none as impressively as she! This little daughter of yours is sure smart." Mrs. Zhang's sighs about Airen's mischievousness do not deter the admiration of Mrs. Xu, who goes on to praise the whole family – such a gentle father, such a loving and benevolent grandmother, children bright and clever. Even the family finances are great.

Responding to the implied "how do you do it?" in Mrs. Xu's praise, Mrs. Zhang gives credit for her family's great success to God, but also provides a telling explanation of the family's origins. "In the beginning before I was engaged to Mr. Zhang," she explains, "I wanted to be up front about my belief [that anyone willing to act under the dictates of God's great love will be blessed]. If we two couldn't take Christ in the center of our hearts, I would not walk through his door [marry him].[29] … Mr. Zhang was in complete agreement. I set up two conditions with him. They were that in this home that we two established, anyone could come live with us and be treated as they ought to be – but as soon as they came to our home, they must treat every member of the family with Christlike love. Otherwise, even if they were our close kindred, flesh and blood, I couldn't let them disturb the order of our home, acting wantonly and taking my limited energy and time up, requiring my patience."

After Mrs. Zhang's speech, her mother-in-law enters the room. Mrs. Zhang excuses herself to attend to some business, and Mrs. Xu seeks the inside scoop from the

[29] The wording here refers to traditional custom whereby a woman, when marrying, joins her husband's natal household.

mother-in-law. Contrary to stereotypes of a resentful the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship, Mrs. Zhang has nothing but praise for her daughter-in-law, and Mrs. Xu comments on it: “Credit must also go to the kind of virtuous, genial and prudent, kindhearted and understanding mother-in-law you are. What family’s popo doesn’t have a few nasty words to say in private about her daughter-in-law? Yet all I’ve heard from you two in private is mutual praise.” Old Mrs. Zhang deflects her part of the praise, returning to the topic of her daughter-in-law’s virtues – in particular, her household management. The mother-in-law is enthusiastic about their family’s industriousness, and shares the results of their labor with such pride that she has to rein herself in. The young Mrs. Zhang has allocated tasks, including caring for chickens and pigs, such that every member of the family (except little Airen) contributes to the family’s financial success, which enables the seven of them (and two servants) to survive on just Mr. Zhang’s income.[30]

In the final scene, it is evening. The family has eaten dinner and somehow, after work, homework, and their urban farming, they have energy and time to enjoy the musical talents of the children together with Mrs. Xu, who has stayed through the day. Grandmother tells a story, and a conversation ensues. The family worships together again, this time taking turns reading a verse at a time before Mr. Zhang prays. After the prayer, Mrs. Xu rises, declares herself inspired by all that she has seen and commits to come back often to learn from the Zhang family. The day, and the play, are over.[31]

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[30] Li Guanfang, *Cong zao dao wan*, 22-38.
[31] Ibid., 38-44.

Jesus and Gender in *From Morning Till Night*

The play's presentation of gender is striking. To begin with, we see more than twice as many female characters as male; seven women and girls to three men and boys. The whole range of female ideals are represented. Mrs. Zhang is an educated mother, exhibiting all the markers of modern home management. The single aunt is immersed in medical training, but still finds time to contribute to the family economy and coach her nieces and nephews in their character development. The grandmother, whose education level is not made explicit (presumably her childhood predated the wider accessibility of female education), performs regular service, does handicrafts, and helps provide moral instruction to her grandchildren. The pubescent daughter, Ailing, is already well trained in being a modern Christian woman. Somehow, she has already become familiar with patients at the hospital her grandmother visits, and she has enough independent discipline or love of service to have prepared a gift for a patient on her own time and volition. The youngest daughter, four-year-old Airen, is in need of her mother's influence to save her from her own impulsiveness. Wei Ma is hard-working and expresses dedication to principles of efficiency. The next-door neighbor, Mrs. Xu, is the embodiment of the audience as an outsider to the Zhang home: she is a woman ready to be set on the right path. I shall return to Mrs. Xu shortly.

The power of the feminine is projected from before the opening curtain of the play. Starting in the introduction, Li Guanfang intertwines Jesus and motherhood. Li writes that one of her goals in writing the play is to "make Christian families' daily lives be full of Christ's presence," a state in which Christ is the head of the household; wise and possessing of truth and grace, he lives among the family and bears "the responsibility

of loving and protecting, comforting, fostering, and training them." The family's attitude toward this motherly Christ ought to be a "childlike adoration, belief, obedience." Godly motherhood is seen in the religious iconography in the home: in the children's bedroom hangs a picture of Jesus blessing the little children, while in the parents' bedroom a picture of "Mary holding her son" received pride of place above the bed. In the Zhang household, divine motherhood is juxtaposed with the motherly benevolence of the divine.[32]

Mrs. Zhang *(Zhang furen)*, as she is called throughout the play, is a striking savior figure. From the first moments of the play, she is righting the wrongs of society, planning to compensate for things lacking in society by preparing a kindergarten for her own child and the neighborhood's young offspring. Her redemptive power is more striking yet in the incident with Airen and the spilled ink. Literally drenched in her follies, Airen is the figure of marred, marked humanity, but her sins are as ink, not scarlet. Mrs. Zhang is a stern God-figure, declaring the limits of acceptability for membership in her household when she says, "If you make such a mess again, I don't want you to be my daughter – you will have to go beg." Airen, fallen man, only spreads the stain by touching her clothes. Seeing Airen's helplessness, her mother acts on divine injunctions to love people (*ai ren*) and acts as rescuing, cleansing savior. She takes her daughter to another room to

[32] The presence of Mary the mother of God may strike readers as rather Catholic. Denominational distinctions were generally of less importance to Chinese Christians than their missionary counterparts (whom they criticized for their divisiveness). I believe that implications of feminine divinity were likely, for Li and her Chinese audience, unfettered by the sense of inappropriate saint-worship that might have troubled some Western Protestant viewers.

help her change her clothes and get cleaned up. Mrs. Zhang's anger was temporary; her mercy and her love are lasting, if long-suffering.

But the nagging sense of Mrs. Zhang's divine displeasure propels the plot forward, sending Airen begging. After Mrs. Xu brings the wandering child home, the play returns to the topic of the strict boundaries set by the domestic sovereign: the family will adopt anyone who wishes to enter as their own, but only those willing to buy into the Zhangs' vision of Christlike love can stay in their family. Mrs. Zhang explains this stringent requirement thus: "this family is my duty, and I should make it on the pattern of heaven. Heaven's foundation is benevolence."[33]

For all her sovereign righteousness, Mrs. Zhang is allowed to be endearingly human, too; she really does not know how to handle her rambunctious four-year-old. After Airen ruins her older sister's painting, Mrs. Zhang, at a loss, kneels with her and prays: "I ask Heavenly Father to guide Airen to do the things she ought to do; I give her hands and feet to Heavenly Father – please let her not follow her own ideas, running wild and acting thoughtlessly (*luan zuo luan pao*)." Perhaps struck with inspiration after this prayer, Mrs. Zhang decides to give Airen a useful task, and calls her over to learn to cut fabric for clothes.[34] Airen responds angrily, "Didn't Mama just give my hands and feet to Heavenly Father? How can I do things? How can I walk?" Mrs. Zhang laughs, again at a loss, and is saved by her husband's arrival from having to explain the complicated relationship between free will and surrender to God. Having witnessed the success and

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[33] Li Guanfang, "Cong zao dao wan," 30.

[34] We see resonance with Mrs. Mei's comments about women needing meaningful responsibilities to foster their commitment to the church.

satisfaction with which other family members contribute to the household economy, the audience may well have hoped that Mrs. Zhang's idea will put Airen's energy to good use and help her embrace an identity as a productive, rather than destructive, member of the household. We, like Mrs. Zhang, cannot see in a single day the outcome of her praiseworthy efforts. Parents in the audience could surely empathize with Mrs. Zhang's discouragement, while admiring her patience and resourcefulness.

Mr. Zhang's entrance at the end of this exchange between his wife and his youngest daughter is emblematic of his role in the play and of Li Guanfang's presentation of masculinity. Mr. Zhang is an instrumental character, but not a fully fleshed-out person. He does what he needs to do as the father – he presides in family worship situations (offering both family prayers), he helps with the children, he goes to work and earns a salary. Mr. Wang provides important structure, but the best content of Christian teaching comes from the mother of the home. This may have been seen as natural; a leader in home and family social service in Hangzhou named Mrs. Wang Jimin pointed out in a 1925 NCC discussion that "in most Chinese families, the mother is in charge of raising the children; to say she is not also responsible for teaching them is absurd."[35]

A sense of masculine inferiority in other aspects of the play may reflect the Victorian idea that women were inherently more spiritually able than men. For instance, while the maidservant, Wei Ma, urges Mrs. Zhang to let her do a greater proportion of the washing, Lao Wang the manservant comes off as a servant who would shirk if his mistress let him get away with it. When he presents his work plan for the day, Mrs.

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[35] *ZQJX disan jie nianhui baogao*, 55. On Mrs. Wang Jimin, see *ZQJX di'er jie nianhui baogao*, 147.

Zhang adds to it significantly. Wei Ma seems already to be up to speed on what efficiency requires and, unbidden, tells her mistress that she will work quickly. Similarly, it is significant that the oldest child in the play is a daughter who is clearly competent and giving in outlook, while the son, loathe to give up his candy to a child in the hospital, is a work very much still in progress.

Mr. Zhang is a male character above reproach, but he does not shine with the brilliance of Mrs. Zhang. He offers occasional comments to his children, but the real spiritual guidance and insight comes from their mother. This is seen in the last scene of the play, when the grandmother tells a story of a terrible bandit attack. The twelve-year-old daughter responds, "When I'm grown up, I'll fix society and get rid of these things." The well-meaning eight-year-old son pipes up, "Grandma, when I'm grown up, I'll take a gun and go kill that bandit." Having exposed his masculine impulses toward vigilante violence, the boy earns a gentle lesson from his mother, who reminds him, "don't you remember the scripture you recited yesterday – Jesus said, 'I come not to condemn the world but to save the world.' … I hope my boy will think of a method to go and redeem this type of sinner, not go to kill him." Molding sons with murderous (albeit well-intentioned) impulses into redeemers is a task worthy of the most heroic of redemptive mothers.

Mrs. Zhang's role as the rational manager of her home is paired with a significant spiritual role. She is savior to her family, and that saving power and influence extends beyond her home through her children and her service efforts (like starting up a neighborhood kindergarten). But it is important to recognize that her saving influence is exerted through concrete, practical methods, through her management skills; her spiritual

role is not separate from her secular role. Mrs. Zhang's home management draws on discourses about personality and individuality that circulated in Protestant and intellectual writings. She is personally overseeing the development of her children's character, and their self-worth, and she does this by managing the home in such a way that each makes a contribution to home economics. We remember that after she prays in despair with troublesome Airen, Mrs. Zhang – presumably inspired by her prayer to the divine – invites her daughter to learn to cut out cloth for clothing.

By sharing the household's economically valuable work with her children, Mrs. Zhang gives them opportunities to develop their own sense of worth, devotion to the family, and enjoyment of productive work. She also models one solution to the problem of housework occupying women's time and energy, limiting their ability to do other meaningful social or religious work. By delegating some of the household's reproductive work, she frees up some of her own time and energy to do such important productive labor for her family and society as her kindergarten project. Mrs. Zhang's approach to housework mirrors that of another model woman, presented in Dorothy Dickinson Barbour's book *Jiduhua de jiating jiaoyu* (later published in English as *Christian Home Education)*. Barbour, who held a Master's Degree from Columbia University and was a professor of religious education at Yenching University, had been invited by Guan Cuizhen to write the book, which was published in 1931.[36] Barbour begins the book by telling of a visit she made to the home a friend, Mrs. Brooks. Though Mrs. Brooks had

[36] Liu Tingfang, "Xu" [Preface], in Badideshui (Dorothy Dickinson Barbour), *Jiduhua de jiating jiaoyu* [Christian home education], tr. Cai Yongchun. Shanghai: Guangxuehui, 1931, 1. For information on Barbour's position and education, Ibid., title page. The book was popular; there were reprints in 1934 and 1937.

six children, Barbour was astonished to find that she was not excessively busy managing her household. Barbour provides a brief overview of one day that passed during her visit to Mrs. Brooks's house. She found that the children prepared breakfast, made their beds, and otherwise helped with housework; the older children helped the younger ones with difficult-to-reach buttons, and they stoked the fire in good time for the suppertime preparations. Mrs. Brooks declared motherhood to be a great deal of fun; she played with her children and ice skated with them and their father. She was not overly burdened with work, and the reason why was clear: she had trained her children to take part in the work and to enjoy it. Mrs. Brooks admitted to Barbour that training them took some effort and attention, but once they had learned, they could do the jobs and instruct their younger siblings on how to do them as well. This freed up Mrs. Brooks to play and ice skate with her children, read books on home management and child education, write a column on popular science, lecture on infant care at the hospital, and occasionally assist her husband with his work as an educator.[37] One assumes that in Mrs. Zhang's family, like Mrs. Brooks', division of labor will similarly enable the mother's skills to be applied to causes outside her own home and simultaneously build the moral character of the children by giving them meaningful responsibility and practice developing and using new skills.

Mrs. Zhang as managing, delegating redeemer will save her family; she also has the power to redeem even the places long broken in the Chinese family. When the neighbor, Mrs. Xu, asks in private about their remarkably warm and supportive mother-

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[37] Badideshui (Barbour), *Jiduhua de jiating jiaoyu*, 4-7. Translation of Barbour's friend's name is found in the English translation of the book: Dorothy Dickinson Barbour, *Christian Home Education*. Shanghai: Christian Literature Society, 1932, 1.

in-law, daughter-in-law relationship, the mother-in-law responds with unstinting praise of Mrs. Zhang. The language she uses idioms to describe her virtues includes "diligent without laboriousness, frugal but not stingy, simple but not vulgar, respectful without fawning." Old Mrs. Zhang praises the household's organization and the way that division of responsibilities allows all members of the household to contribute and ensures its success. The virtues and abilities of this woman have overcome the effects of a system known to breed "Parents-in-law [who] have not given over playing the domineering tyrant, and daughters-in-law [who] often feel crushed and resentful."[38]

Of course, early Republican Christian women were not the first to overcome these animosities. Peter Chen-Main Wang identifies ideals for Chinese Christian women by examining the biographies of Female Christians published in the *Zhonghua Jidujiaohui nianjian* (*China Church Year Book*) between 1916 and 1918. He describes the expectation that young wives will create harmony with their mothers-in-law by winning the family's respect and trust as a pre-Christian Chinese requirement; the hope that a new wife's virtues could help bind the family together in harmony was not exclusive to Christianity.[39] Even the younger Mrs. Zhang's prominent role within her family, with her mother-in-law taking a backseat, is not unique to Christian or nuclear families. Susan Mann shows that during the Qing dynasty, many older women would enter a sort of age of retirement when they reached menopause or age fifty. Such grandmothers sometimes

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[38] Mei, "Making the Home Christian," 475.

[39] Peter Chen-Main Wang, "Models of Female Christianity in Early Twentieth-Century China: A Historiographical Study," in Jessie G. Lutz, ed., *Pioneer Chinese Christian Women: Gender, Christianity, and Social Mobility* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2010), 170-71.

devoted themselves to spiritual pursuits.[40] Old Mrs. Zhang's hospital visits feel like a natural, pious act for an older Chinese woman, not just for a Christian.

Of greater importance to this study than whether the Christian family was *actually* superior to or materially different in any particular way from non-Christian Chinese families is the fact that Christians touted them as such. Many Chinese family values carried into Christianity. But Christianity was sometimes described as a solution for what was *perceived* and advertised by May Fourth reformers as a defunct family system; though Confucianism sometimes served as a foil to Christianity, Christianity really aimed to fill many of the same needs Confucian family teachings addressed.

Mrs. Zhang and her mother-in-law have forged a victory against the sometimes flaws of the patriarchal family structure through their mutual support, but this victory seems to have been enabled by the absence of a father-in-law in the family. Mr. Zhang has lost his father, and this fact makes it easier for his mother to be merely an appendage to their family, and for his wife to take the creative role as divine organizer in her home. Were the grandfather alive and present, the play would have had to grapple with the often knotty issue of traditional patriarchy and the conflict between nuclear family and multi-generational family ideals. Only through his death – we presume him dead; he is never

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[40] Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 66, 68.

mentioned – is the Zhang family’s especially harmonious blending of filial care and couple-centric nuclear family accomplished.

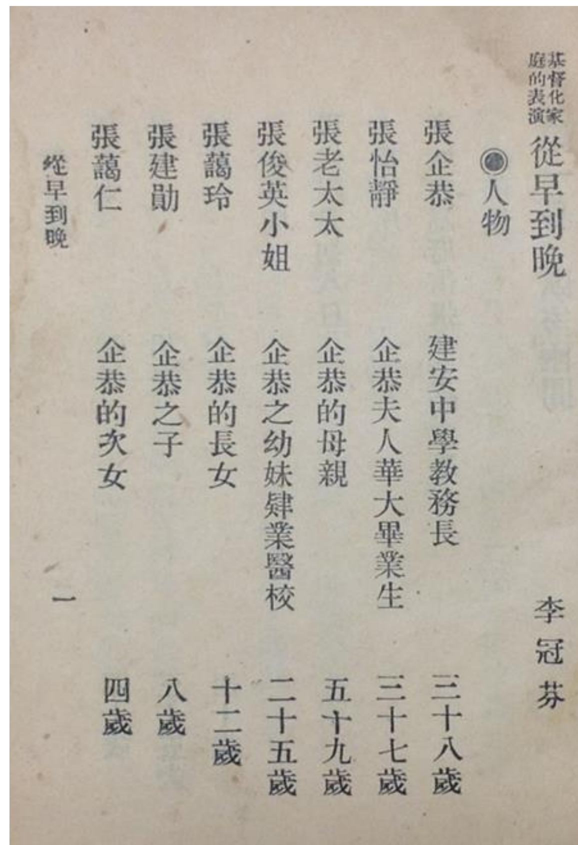
基督化家庭的表演
從早到晚　李冠芬
◉人物
張企恭　建安中學教務長　三十八歲
張怡靜　企恭夫人華大畢業生　三十七歲
張老太太　企恭的母親　五十九歲
張俊英小姐　企恭之幼妹肄業醫校　二十五歲
張藹玲　企恭的長女　十二歲
張建勛　企恭之子　八歲
張藹仁　企恭的次女　四歲
從早到晚　一

Figure 5.1: The characters of *From Morning Till Night*.

The elision of the grandfather allows that generation-shifting melding of Confucian and Christian households to be seamless. Yet even in the absence of the aged patriarch and the traditional family home, even with the young patriarch filling mostly symbolic roles while his powerhouse of a wife sets the agenda and saves the whole family, the patriarchal family structure is present and powerful in this play, in the elision of Mrs. Zhang’s natal family. Li, the author, excises them even from her name, presenting her in the cast of characters as Zhang Yijing (see figure 5.1).[41] Some

[41] On this page the author’s name is given as 李冠芬 (Li Guanfen). This is a typographical error; at the end of the introduction to the play, and on the catalogue of Home Week materials that lists this play, the correct

prominent Christian women in the Republican period did take their husband's surnames, but they generally added them to their original names, like Liu Wang Liming, leader of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in China, who added her husband's "Liu" to her original name (apparently to foreground her marital status so as to ward off persistent suitors who harassed her on her speaking tours).[42] Other famous Christian women kept their own names, like Song Meiling, wife of Chiang Kai-shek, who was alternately referred to as Song Meiling and Madame Chiang. Married women were often referred to by their husbands' names, sometimes using his full name followed by *furen* (wife of). But in the case of Mrs. Zhang, her own given name is paired with her husband's surname. Unless she happened to have been born into the Zhang clan, she should have another name. Even when discussing her premarital life, Mrs. Zhang makes no mention of her family or upbringing. She seems to have sprung into being, perhaps birthed miraculously from the womb of a virginal Christian College.

This strange gap in a story that otherwise resounds with female empowerment exposes the author's uncertainty about exactly how to effect the cultural blend that Mrs. Mei spoke of in 1922, bringing into question her statement that "In all these relationships it is the Christian women who can harmonize the old with the new ideas and set an example."[43] The audience, embodied by the neighbor, Mrs. Xu, surely wondered at the accomplishments of this miracle-working Mrs. Zhang, and perhaps was struck by the

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李冠芳 (Li Guanfang) is given, confirming that the author of this play is indeed the same person who authored materials on the home and served the Home Committee in other capacities.

[42] John S. Barwick, "The Necessity of Virtue and the Virtue of Necessity: Exploring Tensions in Wang Liming's Protestant Vision of the New Chinese Woman," paper presented at the Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference, Toronto, 2017.

[43] Mei, "Making the Home Christian," 475-76.

disparities between her situation and theirs. Ultimately, redeeming the whole family, one's neighborhood, and society to boot is a heavy burden to place on even a Christ-figure in an ideal situation. Is it possible to be a Mrs. Zhang in a family without the perfect situation of absent patriarchs, access to modern home economics education, and religious belief that is shared among all family members? What Herculean effort would it take to save the family and the nation in less ideal circumstances? The line between savior and scapegoat is sometimes very thin. But perhaps admiration of any Christ-figure is always laced with the understanding that they will, like the original, expire while executing their saving task.[44]

Mrs. Zhang would have been a troubling model for many, especially women who did not share her educational background or ideal family situation. She is a fulfillment of Mrs. Mei's words when she spoke in 1922 of "real Christian homes," declaring that "The women presiding over these firesides are sincere and capable Christians, no meek, half-hearted creatures." This contrast literally dehumanizes women with less education, less capability, less faith, bringing a dark shadow to the shining example Mrs. Zhang provides. Aspiring women could, like the neighbor Mrs. Xu, commit to revisiting this model home often and try to learn from Mrs. Zhang, but the very idealness of her situation offered little help to those with more complicated situations.

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[44] In 1925, the Family Commission listed twenty-two publications it had created to guide thinking about family problems. They included one entitled *Are a Family's Needs Greater Than For a 'Good Mother and Wise Wife'?* [*Jiating de yaoqiu you Guoyu xianmuliangqi fou?*]. *ZQJX disan jie nianhui baogao*, 99. This publication is emblematic of the pressures that might have been felt by women, and the fact that there was an at least discursive impulse to lay the entire burden of saving the family at women's feet.

Mrs. Wang's Diary

In the 1930s, a recognition of diverse family situations was finding its way into National Christian Council work in the form of distinct approaches to "city" and "country." Li Guanfang clearly provided the Zhang family as an urban model. That this was Li's area of familiarity seems clear, but it also looked like an area of expertise; in 1935 Li was elected to the Christianize the Home subcommittee on the city home.[45] Fortunately, there were other models available for women seeking to create a true Christian home, including rural women. One is the fictional protagonist of a series of five volumes entitled *Mrs. Wang's Diary*. Written by Margaret H. Brown, a missionary who served under the United Church of Canada in China from 1916 to 1956, these novellas present an eminently down-to-earth, accessible model in Mrs. Wang.[46]

The *Mrs. Wang's Diary* books are written in simple prose. They were intended to meet a need in women's literacy for reading material suited to women who had attained a low level of literacy, specifically, women who had completed *The Thousand-Character Lessons*. The *Thousand-Character Lessons* (*qianzi ke*) were created in 1922 by James Yen of the YMCA as part of a popular literacy campaign.[47] Though, like Yen's lessons, *Mrs. Wang's Diary* certainly had ideological content and goals, Brown's introduction to

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[45] The city home committee consisted of Li, three other Chinese members (one female and two male) and a female missionary; the rural home committee elected at the same time consisted of three missionaries (one male and two female) and a Chinese woman. Boynton, "The Work of the Home Committee," 2.

[46] Brown was on the staff of the Christian Literature Society (*Guangxuehui*). Late in her life she wrote a history of the United Church of Canada in Henan and a biography of Donald MacGillivray, an influential Canadian Presbyterian missionary. For this information and the photograph, see Gregory Adam Scott, *Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 6, Finding Aid for Margaret H. Brown Papers, [194?]-[196?].* Updated from 2010 original by Brigette C. Kamsler. New York: The Burke Library Archives, Columbia University Libraries, Union Theological Seminary, 2014, 2. Accessed online on April 20, 2017, at http://library.columbia.edu/content/dam/libraryweb/locations/burke/fa/mrl/ldpd_8423790.pdf.

[47] Charles W. Hayford, *To the People: James Yen and Village China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 44-5.

the first volume emphasized literacy goals; she complained of the materials available for women at this level of literacy, "if they are not too vulgar, then they are too profound." Brown hoped her book could help fill the need for appropriate and uplifting literature, appealing broadly to "women from every walk of life," and it seems to have indeed been well received; the book sold so well that a second printing was ordered after just two months. A total of twelve printings of this first book were made in the next decade; by 1939, 14,500 copies had been printed.[48]

In the introduction to each successive volume of *Mrs. Wang's Diary*, Brown refers to her protagonist as a real person who had become a friend to her readers. Brown was not duplicitous about the fictional nature of her main character, unlike one Reginald F. Johnston, who first published his 1911 book *A Chinese Appeal to Christendom Concerning Christian Missions* under a Chinese name and only clarified his identity after publication.[49] Though open about her authorship, Brown describes Mrs. Wang in a way that makes her feel like a warm, homey presence. For instance, in the preface to the second volume, Brown expresses her joy at the first book's instant success, and goes on to say, "The author feels that anyone who has read book 1 must already think of Mrs. Wang as a good friend, and must want to know how she went on to progress in learning

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[48] Bao Yuzhen (Margaret H. Brown), *Wang furen de riji, diyi ce: xinnian jiating zhong de huiyi* [Mrs. Wang's Diary, Volume 1: New Year's Notes] (Shanghai: Guangxuehui, 1930), back cover. By way of comparison, James Yen's first volume of the *1,000 Character Primer* sold 20,000 copies within five months – a number Hayford takes as a sign of the movement's popularity (Hayford, *To the People*, 44). Given the fact that Brown's book was aimed at the female sub-population who had completed all four of Yen's primer texts, sales numbers for *Mrs. Wang's Diary* are very impressive.

[49] Reginald Fleming Johnston, *A Chinese Appeal to Christendom Concerning Christian Missions* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, Knickerbocker Press, 1911). In a review of E. R. Hughes' book, *The Invasion of China by the Western World,* Johnston criticized Hughes for not acknowledging his own book's western authorship; Reginald F. Johnston, "Review: *The Invasion of China by the Western World* by E.R. Hughes," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, *University of London* 9.2 (1938), 458.

and belief…"[50] In the preface to the fourth volume, which was published in 1934, Brown wrote:

> Many readers also asked me, is there really a Mrs. Wang like the woman in the book? In my view she is real; I certainly believe that in the Chinese countryside there are a few women like this Mrs. Wang, with the same sort of Christ-like service in their hearts. I very much hope that in the future in the Chinese countryside there will be many women who can, like this Mrs. Wang, obtain the support of their husbands and work hard to learn, helping other women to the point where, as this book discusses, they can lead many other women to read and study. I hope that all who have read *Mrs. Wang's Diary* can be moved in their hearts and turn to Christ, allow Christ to change their lives, serve Christ, and have, in Christ, new life with which to serve the nation and society.[51]

Brown's affection makes it clear that Mrs. Wang is an idealized character, whose influence is intended to reach far beyond a single village. Unlike Mrs. Zhang of *From Morning Till Night,* Mrs. Wang is a developing character who can serve as a guide *into* Christianity and literacy.

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[50] Bao Yuzhen (Margaret H. Brown), "Xiaoyin" [Preface], in *Wang Furen de Riji, di'er ce: fuwu de chubu* [Mrs. Wang's Diary, Volume 2: The Leaven Working] (Shanghai: Guangxuehui, 1931), 1-2.
[51] Bao Yuzhen (Margaret H. Brown), "Xiaoyin" [Preface], *Wang furen de riji, disi ce: fuwu xiangcun* [English title: Mrs. Wang's Diary, Volume 4: The Church at Work in the Village] (Shanghai: Guangxuehui, 1934), 1-2.

The reader picking up *Mrs. Wang's Diary* was greeted by a picture of a smiling, ordinary woman. Mrs. Wang wears glasses, which signal her access to medical care and her literacy.[52] In her hand is a book or a pamphlet, something light and unintimidating. Beside her is a teacup, and behind her, just off-set enough so as to not produce too obvious a halo-effect, is a round window or mirror (see figure 5.2).[53] Mrs. Wang seems comfortable herself and sets her readers at ease, taking them into her (very sterile) confidence through her diary.

Figure 5.2: Mrs. Wang.

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[52] I am indebted to Paul Pickowicz for this insight.
[53] Bao (Brown), *Wang furen de riji* Volume 1, 13.

Mrs. Wang possesses a down-to-earth honesty and a pragmatic skepticism toward new fashions that is endearing. In chapter three of the first volume, Mrs. Wang explains the process of making shoes, with a regional and perhaps a rural awareness: "here, we don't buy leather shoes to wear, we all wear shoes made in our own families. … At the end of the year when the weather is cold I make them cotton-padded shoes." Chapter four is a sales pitch for the cotton-padded shoe. Mrs. Wang explains, "foreigners do not wear cotton-padded shoes; their rooms have floors, so they aren't as cold. We have brick floors; if we didn't wear cotton-padded shoes, we would get frostbite." Aware of modern trends, but eminently practical, Mrs. Wang explains that while they are not as pretty as a slimmer shoe, cotton-padded shoes are preferable to frostbite. Skeptical of new-fangled but impractical ways, Mrs. Wang offers a very gentle critique of the mode of dress of the new teacher at her daughter's school: "She is a graduate of a teacher's college established by the province, and she wears the most fashionable clothes, so the students in the school all want to be like her. She wears silk stockings and leather shoes. I think she must be very cold."[54] By criticizing newfangled but impractical fashions and positioning herself at a comfortable distance from both foreigners and markers of modernity, Mrs. Wang establishes herself as relatable and sensible. The sense that she is a pragmatic, level-headed personality pervades the remainder of the book, most of which is devoted to a chronicle of her conversion to Christianity.

Mrs. Wang takes the same frank and open approach to Christianity that she took to shoes. She explains that early in her marriage she thought her husband, the only

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[54] Bao (Brown), *Wang furen de riji* Volume 1, 1-6.

Christian in town, was really strange. Not understanding Christianity, Mrs. Wang used to secretly burn incense to Buddha, knowing that her Christian husband would be angry if he found out. Her husband tried to teach her to read out of the Gospel of Mark, but she did not really work at it; "Our neighbor's daughters couldn't read, so why should I learn to recognize characters?" Ambivalent toward Christianity, Mrs. Wang enjoyed the songs her husband sang but laughed at his peculiar worship habits. But there was one way she could not be at peace with their situation – Mrs. Wang's heart was afraid that their failure to worship Buddha at the New Year would lead to disaster for her family.

Mrs. Wang models an experimental approach to spiritual beliefs. After describing her fears about divine retribution, she explains, "Later I had a child, and I thought for certain that it would not live long. But the child unexpectedly grew strong and good-looking, and only then did I believe that my husband's beliefs were not a hundred percent wrong. I also thought that worshipping idols had no use, because in spite of not worshipping them for so long, we had been peaceful, and had encountered no troubles." After unwittingly setting up her family's religious practice as an experiment, Mrs. Wang analyzed the results, and her good fortune disproved her prior beliefs. Still, some time went by before Mrs. Wang adopted the Christian beliefs of her husband.

This first volume of *Mrs. Wang's Diary*, which was published in September 1930, was subtitled "New Year's Notes" (*xinnian jiating zhong de huiyi*). The book's content addressed the same need that Peter Shih brought up in his talk later that year – the need to adapt important Chinese festivals to Christianity. Though the book was not published by the Home Committee, it correlated with their priorities. In 1928 the committee had planned a year of researching "how Christian families should use the Spring Festival

holidays." They prepared a small volume "with special worship ceremonies, recreation, family budget, etc."[55] It is more than likely that the Home Committee's goal, and its printed material, were familiar to Brown.[56]

The New Year theme provides a cheerful framing mechanism for Mrs. Wang's conversion story. Chapter One invites the reader in with a familiar and happy illustration modeled on New Years' posters: a pair of little girls bow to each other while admiring each others' (identical) new clothes, before a background on which are legible the blessing "Happy New Year." Mrs. Wang's diary jumps into the action of her life just a few days before the new year holiday, and readers surely found familiar the sense of hustle and bustle that pervades the book's pages as she discusses prepping the traditional new clothes for her family for the holiday. Beginning thus with an easy commonality between Christian and non-Christian New Year experiences probably brought a happy sense of familiarity. Beyond establishing an energetic and cheerful context, this beginning also reflects what historian Dana Robert describes as evangelical women's "assumptions of female domesticity." Robert explains that "Although domestic training and the Christian home were not the same thing, domestic training was always considered an essential part of the economy of the Christian home."[57] So it is not surprising that

[55] In the same report, the Home Committee called for "a family monthly magazine up to the standard of the thousand-word lessons." *ZQJX diliu jie nianhui baogao*, 49.
[56] In 1930 Brown had no documented connection to the Christianize the Home Committee that I have seen. In October 1935 Guan Cuizhen, the secretary of the Home Committee, recommended that Brown be invited to a subcommittee on the publication of Home literature. Brown agreed and, as secretary of a committee on Research and Literature on the Home, helped prepare for the 1936 Home Committee Conference. At that conference she was nominated a member of the Shanghai area home committee. National Christian Council of China, "Staff Meeting – October 22, 1935," 1. SMA, Q579-4-142; National Christian Council of China, "Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Committee on Christianizing the Home," Shanghai: Sept. 23-26, 1936, 6, 15. SMA, Q579-4-142.
[57] Robert, "The 'Christian Home,'" 155.

when Margaret Brown begins to establish the character of her model Christian woman, it was upon her duty to make clothes for her family for the new year that she first focused, explaining her purchase of fabric in "patriotic blue" for a new robe for her son in chapter one, and the use of some satin taken from her dowry to make clothing for her daughter in chapter two.

Mrs. Wang's conversion story arises relatively naturally from her account of her family's New Year traditions. Like their neighbors, the Wangs hang bright new papers bearing auspicious couplets *(duilian)* by their door to celebrate the new year, but the Wangs' couplets do not welcome financial success, but are statements of Christian beliefs, like "love others as yourself." Like other Chinese families, they also stay up until midnight on New Year's Eve to greet the new year (*shousui*), but their family makes prayer part of the night. They greet each other on New Year's Day with bows instead of kowtows, then have a prayer meeting and sing special New Year's hymns (their children's favorites). Like most families, they eat a big New Year's meal together, but they do not drink alcohol, which can hurt their bodies and their souls.[58] The Wang family traditions have much in common with non-Christian families' celebrations: the happy (and sometimes stressful) period of preparation, the cleaning, the cooking, the hanging of *duilian*. There is much retained in the Christian New Year celebration. What is more, if the reader accepts Mrs. Wang as a relatively authentic voice in spite of the books' foreign missionary authorship, the book's protagonist provides a comfortable sense that new customs do not always have to register as a loss. Indeed, Mrs. Wang seems happy to

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[58] Bao (Brown), *Wang furen de riji* Volume 1, 15-20.

leave behind the fearful approach to deity that she associates with her old beliefs in Buddhism. Likewise, though her family's New Year traditions are different from her previous expectations, they have meaning in her family – her children have happy associations with the New Year's hymns they sing annually, for example – and the loss of alcoholic enjoyment is shrugged off, not onerous. As a less powerful member of the family, the wife and daughter-in-law in someone else's house, the cultural pressure toward peace-making in the home were pitted against her allegiance to her religion and the customs with which she was accustomed. Perhaps the quiet, staunch figure of Mr. Wang is as much a model for readers as Mrs. Wang herself; she seems rather powerless before she converts to Christianity and experiences ongoing change in her own life.

The family's New Year traditions provide an innocuous transition to Mrs. Wang's discussion of her own conversion story. One New Year's custom that makes their family different from the other villagers is that each year during the New Year time, Mr. Wang goes to a church conference in the city. When Mr. Wang urged his wife to go with him, she at first refused on the basis of her two small children, whom she could not leave. Mr. Wang responded, "'There's a nursery in the church, with people who will take care of them.'" Mrs. Wang's duties to her father-in-law sprang next to mind; who would care for him in her absence? Here grandfather piped up that he could care for himself a few days. Her excuses spent (and the patriarch having spoken), Mrs. Wang agreed to go. Here there is implicit praise for Mrs. Wang's filiality in putting her family, and especially her father-in-law, first. The cultural continuity in that fact highlights the limitations of Mrs. Wang as a model. Again, by following her husband, she is following expectations of female-male relationships. While Mrs. Wang can model some transitions, she cannot offer help

for the particular problems encountered, for example, by a Christian woman living with a non-Christian family.

Mrs. Wang had a wonderful time at the conference, which took place in the city, a day's journey away by horse-drawn cart. During the week-long conference, Mrs. Wang attended Bible classes designated for people who could not read and classes for learning to write characters – classes which used, of course, the *Thousand-character Lessons*. "[The teacher] told us if we focused and learned all of the 1,000 characters, which we could do in just a few months, we could read simple books." Every day, a pastor spoke in the afternoon. "He spoke really well. Everyone listened to the things he said and found it full of meaning. While listening to him talk, we felt like we left the world behind." During the last evening's meeting, Mrs. Wang felt very moved by the pastor's words and decided to become a Christian.

Here we have an interesting moment – the definition of what this transition means to Mrs. Wang. "Deciding to become a Christian and becoming a Christian are two different things," she explains. "Now I only know a few characters; when my husband has a little time in the evenings he patiently teaches me. In the countryside there isn't a lot of free time…" Mrs. Wang seems to have equated her Christianity with her literacy.[59] In the next chapter this gaffe is corrected and the connection between literacy and religion widens a bit; Mrs. Wang delves into the story of the preacher and later, the Bible woman who came to their village. The preacher brought a small organ, which he set up in the Wang family's home and played during their evening services to help attract the

[59] Ibid, 23-33.

villagers to Christianity. It is probably clear where this story is going: Mrs. Wang and her husband organized a church in their village. Mr. Wang became an elder in it, an enthusiastic preacher to the congregation, which at first numbered just ten or so, and later swelled to about fifty. The next step for these prototype rural Christian converts is to establish a girls' school, and they do it. Here there is a contrast with Mrs. Zhang of *From Morning Till Night* – Mrs. Zhang asks her husband's opinion, but is clearly planning to lead her kindergarten project herself. Mrs. Wang, while clearly involved in some way in setting up their village's girls' school, does not in any way take it on as her own; her "we" seems to indicate that the project was her husband's idea, and the project a group project among church members, with some village support or cooperation.[60] Advances in literacy and education keep pace with church growth in this village.

That Mrs. Wang is not immediately transformed into a powerhouse Mrs. Zhang is important to her accessibility as a character and her applicability as a model. Her empowerment as a newly literate woman is the theme of the second volume of *Mrs. Wang's Diary*, subtitled *First Steps of Service*. In this story, two young daughters-in-law from the house next door come to Mrs. Wang and tell her they want to learn to read. She responds enthusiastically that her husband would be happy to teach them. "But these two young daughters-in-law immediately looked afraid, and said, 'Oh, that won't do, don't ask him. You know we young women can't learn to read from a man. If we learn from him, this will cause other people to gossip. Secondly, we are timid, because you know we are very stupid women, and your husband is such an intelligent person, we couldn't learn

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[60] Ibid, 34-47.

anything from him.'" Mrs. Wang, befuddled, asks, "'What do you want me to do?' and they answered, 'Please teach us yourself!'" Taken aback, Mrs. Wang delays answering. That night she narrates the conversation to her husband, and he is afire with enthusiasm for her opportunity to grow in her own abilities and to serve both these women and Jesus – for this is surely a great opportunity for her to introduce Christian teachings to the two young ladies.[61] Mrs. Wang's own modest progress has put her in a position to help empower other women.

The protagonist's ability to provide meaningful service expands through volumes three and four of *Mrs. Wang's Diary*. In the third volume, Mrs. Wang records and responds to various illnesses that arise in her village, discussing proper methods of sanitation and disease control. Her husband, after reading all that she has written, urges Mrs. Wang to put her writings to good use, and together they plan a hygiene campaign for their village. The fourth volume picks up the story some time later; the hygiene campaign has already concluded, and one of its legacies is that the village head is now bound and determined to have the whole village vaccinated for smallpox. The central topic of this volume, however, is the mass literacy campaign that Mrs. Wang and her husband organize. The Li family next door (whose daughter-in-law Mrs. Wang taught to read) offers their living room for the men's class, which the son of that family will teach. Mrs. Wang teaches the women in her own home.[62]

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[61] Brown, *Wang furen de riji* Volume 2, 1-8.
[62] Bao Yuzhen (Margaret H. Brown), *Wang furen de riji, disan ce: Jiating richang weisheng faze* [Mrs. Wang's Diary, Volume 3: Hygiene Notes] (Shanghai: Guangxuehui, 1933).

Shorter-term story lines thread through these first four volumes of *Mrs. Wang's Diary*; in the second, for instance, Mr. Wang heroically saves the Li family's son from a group of retreating bandits (a warlord army), winning the Li family's approval for Mrs. Wang's association with their daughter, and eventually, their openness to Christianity. In the third volume, someone breaks into the Wang family's home and steals some items of clothing. After he is caught, the young thief, a first-time offender seeking to pay off a gambling debt, is rejected by his father. The Wang family takes him in. Their mercy proves transformative and he turns over a new leaf, eventually winning his father's love back by showing filial attentiveness during a serious illness and especially by taking the crucial step of bringing his father on a life-saving trip to the hospital.[63] Through these short vignettes, which invariably illuminated by the transformative and protective power of both Christian love and rational, literate know-how, the longer story arc is certainly Mrs. Wang's growing influence. Literacy, and the openness to rational learning that it enables, transforms Mrs. Wang into a woman with the knowledge and abilities to uplift her family. Her sphere of influence grows gradually and naturally, without any self-aggrandizement on her part (it is always other people who invite or urge her to service).

The theme of female example, so embraced by women missionaries, comes up when Mr. and Mrs. Wang are discussing starting a hygiene campaign. When Mr. Wang reads the portions of his wife's diary that address hygiene and disease prevention, he becomes excited and wants to start a hygiene campaign. Mrs. Wang writes, "He says he wants to go to the city and discuss it with the doctors there, and he thinks he can invite

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[63] Bao (Brown), *Wang furen de riji* Volume 2, 36-46; Bao (Brown), *Wang furen de riji* Volume 4, 25-32, 39, 60-63.

one of those doctors to come and help us. I asked him how I could help some little bit, and he said I could help in a lot of areas: first I should go to the homes of the women I know and help them to get interested in this, so that when it is time they will come hear the talk. I can also discuss many other things with them that they might not know in their everyday lives. Most important, I can be a good example for them. Actually, in the end an example is much better than talking."[64] At the tail end of this discussion of all the ways that Mrs. Wang can convince and lay the groundwork for this hygiene campaign (on top of her authorship of hygiene materials that her husband, at least, thinks will be highly useful), the statement that "actually in the end an example is much better than talking" falls rather flat. Perhaps what we are seeing is the author, Margaret Brown, hesitating on the cusp of the realization that, as Chinese Christian women would contend in the survey published in 1938, Chinese women could indeed be taught by more direct, professional methods. Perhaps Brown hoped to allay the anxieties of women who, like Mrs. Wang and her young proteges, might initially feel out of their depth teaching or organizing others. The "example matters most" line is quite different here than it was as used among missionary mothers, for whom that idea served to keep their focus on the sacred domestic sphere where their offspring and Victorian expectations kept them bound somewhat more tightly than they had anticipated when contemplating missionary service. On the other hand, the undereducated rural women who were the target readership of Brown's novels are implied to be rather repressed and timid, people who would need encouragement to engage in any leadership at all. Perhaps in Brown's mind such readers, for whom Mrs.

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[64] Bao (Brown), *Wang furen de riji* Volume 3, 47-8.

Wang could be an exciting and intimidating model, best be encouraged to first make a change in their own homes, and from there, like Mrs.Wang, expand their influence to uplift others (especially women) in their own villages and beyond.

The Puzzle of the Patriarchy

In the early 1930s, the National Christian Council had just initiated a Five Year Movement to try to recoup and move forward after the devastations of repeated anti-Christian movements in the 1920s, devastations that included some loss of Christian life, loss of missionary personnel, and loss of faith in some who became disenchanted with Christianity's imperialist ties. Like the New Culture intellectuals, Christians in China consciously or unconsciously perceived their religion as being engaged in a Darwinian struggle for survival. Christianity was in competition with both superstition and secularism. Against superstition, it used the force of rationalism; against secularism, it promoted spirituality.

In contrast with Confucian structures that New Culture and May Fourth intellectuals had been saying for a decade were defunct, the Christianize the Home movement placed the married couple at the core of the family, rather than the father-son relationship that characterized and dominated early twentieth-century perceptions of the Confucian family. Mrs. and Mr. Zhang chose their own marriage partners, while the Wangs seem to have made an arranged marriage, but in both families, the relationship has developed to be warm and supportive. Mrs. Wang wants to tell her husband about her two young neighbors' request for reading lessons, but she is waylaid by the need to mend a torn soccer uniform. Only after family worship and just before turning out the light was

she able to tell her husband about the women who wanted her to teach them to read, in a parallel to Mrs. Zhang's early-morning confidences to her husband about her dream of starting a kindergarten. A supportive, warm marriage relationship is at the core of each home, and in line with Christianize the Home family reform efforts. But in each case there is also a sense that each woman feels her husband's permission is required or at least ought reasonably to be sought, the idea that there is a checking-in that each woman does with her husband over her affairs that it seems not met by a similar checking-in regarding his business or agricultural decisions. Mr. Wang is the mover and shaker in his family, urging Mrs. Wang to take more prominent or more public service and teaching roles. He has also been her teacher, helping her make the conversion to both literacy and Christianity. Yet, he is compassionate and helpful, helping her with housework when she is especially busy. Like Mr. Zhang, who gets the children up and leads them in calisthenics, Mr. Wang is an involved contributor within his household. The marriage relationship is not a site of patriarchal friction for either the Zhang or Wang family.

One of the major family reform shifts that has been noted in the literature as occurring during the early twentieth century is a movement toward the nuclear family and away from extended. It is worth noting that neither of the families examined here as models was a strictly nuclear family. The Zhang family included an aunt and a grandmother as full members of the household, though that household revolved around the younger couple. Similarly, the Wangs housed and cared for Mr. Wang's father for years before he died. In neither story is the older generation character the central character in the story or the household, however; in this way their households stood in contrast to, for example, the Li family next door to the Wangs, whose daughter-in-law

was often intimidated by her dictatorial and curmudgeonly mother-in-law. The criticisms Brown leveled at grumpy old Mrs. Li, including real reproach at the emotional distress she caused her daughter-in-law by threatening to find her son a concubine, are critiques of certain social realities and possibilities (the reality of the dictatorial grump, the possibility of concubinage) not of the presence of the older generation in the house, nor of filial piety.

Mrs. Wang's diary clearly shows that she wishes her husband to be known as filial, and that filial piety was an important principle to him too. Similarly, the respectful and loving relationship between Mrs. Zhang and her mother-in-law is a fulfilment of the Qing ideal that daughters-in-law bring harmony by earning the respect and affection of their mothers-in-law, not a departure from Qing-era expectations for family virtue.[65] Such continuities may have made Mrs. Zhang's values legible to Chinese viewers; the play spoke of harmonious family in a language intelligible to everyone. Perhaps this was the kind of living Christian fulfillment of Confucian principles that proponents of the fulfillment theology had in mind. The Zhang and Wang families were the products of Christian transformative conservatism, an ideal that could heal the broken parts of Confucian patriarchy without losing the goals of intergenerational harmony and filial love.

The couple-centered family structure downplays the importance of the older-generation patriarch in the family structure. As discussed above, in the Zhang family, the patriarch is carefully left absent, an elision which allows young Mrs. Zhang to be the

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[65] Peter Chen-Main Wang, "Models of Female Christians," 170-71.

creator in her home, but there is a troubling absence of her own natal family that shows that the author had not worked out well what ought to happen with patriarchs in the Christian family. The Wang family presents a slightly more complete story; Mr. Wang's father seems to be Christian, and lives peacefully and unobtrusively with the family. Li Guanfang has killed the patriarch off; Margaret Brown has rendered him benevolent and innocuous. Both approaches seem to reflect an attitude expressed at the 1922 National Christian Conference – the idea that at least the worst parts of the old ways and old superstition would just die off under the wave of rationality that was the result of long historical forces.

The Wang family's stories show a dynamic tension between the rational and spiritual prongs of their approach to promoting Christianity. The Wang family wins tolerance and good will from their neighbors by serving out of a deep Christian love in ways that resonate with deeply held values and beliefs. When Mr. Wang follows the retreating army and convinces them to release the Li family's son, the act of restoring her most prized person, her son, wins old Mrs. Li's approval for her daughter-in-law's continued studies. The daughter-in-law and son had thus far been unable to conceive a child, and the Li matriarch had often spoken with disturbing determination about finding a concubine for the son to produce an heir. But after the bandit incident, their good feelings for their daughter-in-law (the link to the heroic Wang family) was such that the old parents stopped discussing finding a concubine.

The other woman who Mrs. Wang taught to read in the second volume, young Mrs. Chen, was a widow; in line with Qing morals, she wished to remain a chaste widow after her husband's death. Her parents-in-law were very poor, and to young Mrs. Chen's

distress, they expressed a desire to relieve their financial strain by marrying off their daughter-in-law.[66] Peter Chen-Main Wang shows that biographies of Chinese Christian women published between 1916 and 1918 indicate that widows remaining single were considered true to the "highest standard of Christian marriage," and their choice "suggests they are loyal to their dead husband in accord with Chinese tradition."[67] Mrs. Chen's story confirms that this thinking persisted into the 1930s. But what Brown advocated was not the continuation of the norm of widow chastity; rather it was the individual choice of the daughter-in-law. Here, too, the Wangs were able to help. On a trip to a Christian hospital in the city, Mr. Wang spoke with a doctor acquaintance and learned that the hospital needed literate single Christian women to learn to be nurses there. Young Mrs. Chen and her parents-in-law agreed to let Mrs. Chen go study to become a nurse, and the daughter-in-law ceased being a burden and began to support herself financially.[68] Willingness to pursue education and employment outside of the home and the village provided a way to maintain filial deference to her parents-in-laws' needs and supported her morally laudable choice to refrain from remarrying.

The Wang family's significant social service to their village (they initiated and supported both a hygiene campaign and a literacy campaign) won them the tolerance of their neighbors when they broke with tradition in major ways. When Mr. Wang's father passed away, the couple buried him after just three days, mourning his death with a modest feast and a service led by their pastor, and refusing any gifts of incense or other

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[66] Bao (Brown), *Wang furen de riji*, Volume 2, 15-20, 23-29, 32-44.
[67] Peter Chen-Main Wang, "Models of Female Christians," 173.
[68] Bao (Brown), *Wang furen de riji*, Volume 2, 50-52.

offerings that conflicted with their beliefs about the afterlife. One of Mr. Wang's cousins seemed to take offense to these choices and challenged Mr. Wang, saying "the whole village is saying you are an unfilial son!" Mr. Wang knew better of his fellow villagers, and patiently answered his cousin, explaining that his reasoning did not just stem from his religious belief. The quick burial was to avoid sanitation issues that would arise from keeping his father's body in the home too long; his refusal to burn incense was not just because of Christianity, but was also in line with the Republican government's recent disapproval of such rituals; in times of national difficulty, frugality demanded that one limit unnecessary expenditures. Mr. Wang's claiming of an alliance between Christianity, science, and the state is striking for its resonance with the New Life Movement, which was underway at the time this book was published. Mr. Wang's answers did not satisfy his cousin, but as it turned out, the villagers informed him, the cousin's real intention in confronting Mr. Wang was corrupt. He hoped to be the one to help Mr. Wang purchase the ritual objects and take a cut of the money for himself. Mr. Wang's neighbors told him, "though they thought you buried [your father] very quickly, the whole village all knew your hearts are very good, and that you normally treated [your father] with a lot of love, so they all felt you must have acted with a good conscience, without any unfilial behavior." Ultimately, the villagers' knowledge of the Wangs' relationships and character dispelled concerns over their failure to perform expected acts of filial piety. The fictional villagers recognized, as Brown and other Christians in China no doubt hoped their real neighbors would, that Christians could still value and live filial piety, although they

allowed their expression of it to be mediated by concerns like religious belief, hygiene, and finances.[69]

When Lu Xun spoke of living under the dictates of his parents' desires, but leaving the door open for his own children to make a better life, he was struggling with the question of how to do things in a new and better way while still embodying respect and love to those who raised you in an old way. This question is closely related to the question that Chinese nationalists wrestled with at the end of the Qing dynasty; how can we improve China without rejecting the very things that make it what it is? Christians were asking a third variation on this question when they wondered how to introduce their new ways and beliefs but express enough respect for existing beliefs and practices to get tolerance and, better yet, buy-in from the Chinese.

This chapter has examined two proffered solutions to the problem of indigenization of Christianity in the form of two previously unexamined pieces of literature that answer to the question, "what was the Chinese Christian home?" Within the creative space of their homes, we have watched the Zhang and Wang families working out their relationships to God, family members, and neighbors in different ways. Yet we cannot assume that there were just these two ideals, perfectly suited to rural and urban circumstances. The true Christian Home was a moving target; defined in contrast to superstition and sinful secularism, it encompassed extended family, but centered on the nuclear marriage. It embraced many Chinese family ideals, but practiced Christianized rituals. The Christian family was defined, among other factors, by its embracing of

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[69] Brown, *Wang furen de riji* Volume 4, 47-59.

opportunities to learn and improve more than which particular opportunities for learning were available. I see resonance between the Zhang and Wang families' work ethics and the missionary women who felt compelled to keep up with current clothing fashions because their very persons, as well as their households, ought to represent the ideal of continual improvement.[70] In short, in 1930s China, the Christian Home was expected to be a work in progress, a work whose progress would affect a regenerating Chinese society in substantial ways.

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[70] Hunter, *Gospel of Gentility,* 136.

Chapter Six – Conclusion

The Home Committee survived the Anti-Japanese War, and it survived the Communist Revolution, as well. As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, Guan Cuizhen continued to travel as Home Committee Secretary as the NCC was moving personnel to West China in late 1938. She was an occasional speaker on the radio broadcasts the NCC sent out during the late 1930s, one of several voices that signaled unity and continued interconnectedness in a far-flung Protestant community.[1]

Figure 6.1: Home Week Materials from 1946, *A New Hope for the Family.*

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[1] E.g., Ronald Rees, *National Christian Council of China – Broadcast from Station XMHA, Shanghai, June 12, 1938.* SMA, Q579-4-141, 53-54; Alice Gregg, *National Christian Council of China: Bulletin Number 20, Shanghai, November 8, 1938.* SMA, Q579-4-141, 108.

The Home Committee kept up its publishing work, printing Home Week materials for all but three years during the Anti-Japanese War.[2] Though I have not located materials for every year, I can provide a sampling of the topics covered. In 1939, as discussed above, the Home Week topic was “the family in the present crisis.” In 1940, the topic was “the mentally and spiritually healthy family,” *(shenxinling jianquan de jiating),* and included “a healthy body,” “healthy infants,” “a robust heart,” and “children’s intellectual development.”[3] In 1941, Shanghai’s Moore Memorial Church led out, preparing a home week focused on “Thanksgiving.” After the war ended, the Home Committee prepared materials for 1946 with the optimistic title *Jiating de xin xiwang* (A New Hope for Families) (see figure 6.1). In 1948, a 110-page booklet on the topic *Jiduhua de hunyin* (Christianized Marriage) included a literature list and a survey for churches to fill out and return, as well as charming photographs of a model Christian couple as they married and advanced through life together (see figure 6.2).[4] In 1949, in spite of disrupted communications between the West China producers of materials and the publishers in Shanghai, the Home Committee managed to produce another booklet for Home Week, entitled *Jiduhua de jiating guanxi* (Christian Family Relationships) (see figure 6.3). Mr. He Cihong, the chair of the committee, went to heroic lengths to provide materials, making up for the portion of the manuscript that did not make it to Shanghai.[5]

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[2] Pan Yumei, “Preface,” in Pan Yumei, ed., *Jiduhua de jiating guanxi* [Christian Family Relationships] (Shanghai: CLS, 1949), 1. SLDD.

[3] Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui Jiduhua jiating weiyuanhui [NCC Christianize the Home Committee], *1940 nian Jiduhua jiating yundong zhou richeng* [1940 Christianize the home movement week daily program] (Shanghai: CLS, 1940). SMA, U123-0-160.

[4] Quanguo Jiduhua jiating weiyuanhui [National Christianize the home committee], *Jiduhua de hunyin* [Christianized Marriage] (Shanghai: CLS, 1948). SMA, U123-0-159.

[5] Pan Yumei, “Preface,” in Pan Yumei, ed., *Jiduhua de jiating guanxi,* 2.

In 1950, the topic for home week reflected the new political situation. It was *xuexi yu laodong* (study and labor).[6] That fall, the Christianize the Home Committee held a national meeting, its third since the Communist Party's victory. Local committees issued reports, the committee created an updated handbook, and research and discussion continued.[7]

Figure 6.2: A photo from the 1948 Home Week materials, *Christianized Marriage.*

[6] Jiang Yizhen quanjia [The whole family of Jiang Yizhen], *1950 Jiduhua jiating yundong zhou ziliao zhi er: Jianku zhong chengzhang de jia* [1950 Christianize the home week materials 2: The family that grows through struggle] (Shanghai, CLS: 1950). HDSXY.

[7] "Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui quanguo Jiduhua jiating shigong huiyi jianbao" [Brief report of the NCC National Christianize the home work conference], Shanghai, October 11-14, 1950. SMA U123-0-37, 45-65; "Zhonghua quanguo Jidujiao xiejinhui quanguo jiating shigong huiyi shouce" [Handbook of the NCC national home work conference], Shanghai, October 11-14, 1950. SMA, U123-0-37, 110-122.

The NCC held a national meeting in 1950, as well, but it was the last time that organization would meet. At the national meeting, the entire group agreed to sign the "Christian Manifesto," a document that called on Christian churches in China to recognize Christianity's heritage of imperialism and to work to strip the church of vestiges of imperialism. This meeting was clearly a turning point for the organization, which had not even put the Christian Manifesto on the agenda for the conference. Starting in early 1951, the NCC was subject to denunciations during the period's rash of struggle sessions against Christians. Daniel Bays describes the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, the union of churches that was pulled together by a group that included the authors of the Christian Manifesto, as the heir to the NCC. That organization was formally inaugurated in May 1951, and its relationship with the Chinese government was clarified and formalized in 1954. The Three-Self Movement would try to encompass all of Chinese Christianity, but would fail.[8]

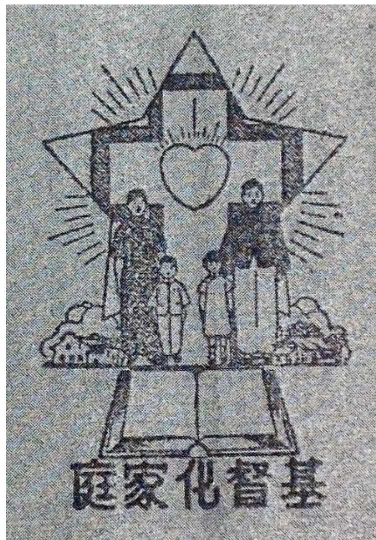

Figure 6.3: A small image adorning the back of the 1949 Home Week materials.

[8] Bays, *New History*, 161-65.

In 1950, the Christianize the Home Committee fulfilled an old ambition by starting a magazine. Published quarterly, *Jiayuan* (The family garden) included articles on a range of topics familiar to the readers of this dissertation, including marriage, family spirituality, and village schools.[9] Yet there was change as well; the magazine also reveals greater communist influences than previously, including a report on a "New Society activity," for instance.[10] Beginning in June 1951, anti-imperialist phraseology colors the article titles.[11] Despite such efforts, it seems that the history of the group was too strongly embedded in the transnational community for it to survive once Americans became the enemy in the "Resist America, Help Korea" conflict. The sixth issue of the magazine, published in September 1951, is the last I have found. A thorough analysis of the Christianize the Home Movement during and after war and revolution is beyond the scope of this dissertation. The history I have presented in the five chapters of this dissertation, showing the transnational nature of the organization and its teachings, allow us to imagine the turmoil and difficulty involved in tearing apart this community.

Historian of Christianity Daniel Bays supposes that unregistered "house churches" began in 1955, after the arrest of independent preacher Wang Mingdao and Catholic Bishop Gong Pingmei, presumably because these arrests represented signal defeats of the last hold-outs who had stubbornly resisted affiliating with the Three-Self Patriotic Movement.[12] But this dissertation has shown that the home had long been an

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[9] "Benqi mulu" [Table of contents], *Jiayuan* 1 (June 1950).
[10] "Benqi mulu" [Table of contents], *Jiayuan* 2 (Sept. 1950).
[11] "Benqi mulu" [Table of contents], *Jiayuan* 5 (June 1951); Benqi mulu" [Table of contents], *Jiayuan* 6 (Sept. 1951).
[12] Bays, *New History*, 173, 176-77.

arena of spirituality. Mrs. Wang, the fictional village woman, invited a preacher to stay in her home in what we can assume was a common practice; the meetings they held there, complete with organ-playing and hymn-singing, helped attract the villagers who would later become the first members of the church Mr. Wang helped establish. But it was not only in villages, where resources were thin and church buildings few and far between, that we have seen home set up as a center for spirituality. Even well before the movement to focus on rural work, the question of home as in competition with the church arose.

The term for house churches is *jiating jiaohui* – which can also be translated as "family church," or "home church."[13] The distinction in terminology reminds us that "home" and "family" are both reasonable translations for *jiating.* When many Christians were already practicing family worship *(jiating libai)* in their homes, they might have felt it to be a small step indeed to extend the invitation to others to join. While the distinction between registered and unregistered churches certainly became very significant, I wonder if at first the unofficial gatherings were merely the continuation or enlargement of family worship practices. *Jiayuan* gives us a hint at such a phenomenon, describing in its fourth issue a joint family worship service.[14]

Perhaps the sustaining, sanctifying discipline of daily family worship took on new meaning in a time of great change for the churches, feeding an independent sense of spirituality rooted in Christian homes. Posited at the tail end of this dissertation, this statement is speculation and requires more research to answer, research conducted with

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[13] Ibid, 182 note 46.
[14] "Benqi mulu" [Table of Contents], *Jiayuan* 4 (March 1951). I am indebted to Joseph Esherick for helping me think forward to the possible connection between the Christianize the Home Movement and the house churches.

an eye for the connections between home-based Christian spirituality in the Republican Era and the house churches that sprang up so shortly after the end of the Christianize the Home movement.

The Christianize the Home movement in China produced no literature that I have found after the end of *Jiayuan* in 1951. Perhaps the Home Committee was damned by association with the NCC. More likely, it went the way of the home economics movement, which Helen Schneider tells us was denatured and divided up in the Communist Party's reshuffling in this same period, some of its component parts being shuttled off to other academic disciplines or social service structures. The Home Committee's catch-all engagement with multiple different fields of effort made it a good tool for expanding women's influence and authority, but it made it, like home economics departments, easy for the state to split up and divide off into medical, sociology, ethics, and education fields. The Home Committee's work, like that of home economics departments, was associated with Nationalist projects and bourgeois gendered divisions of labor repugnant to the Communists.[15]

In the end the Home Committee's transnational roots were likely simply too much to move past in the anti-American environment of the early Korean War era; one of the similarities between it and the Nationalists' relief approaches was the family-centric approach which earned Communist ire by emphasized family responsibility rather than state programs. The reliance on Western approaches to education and childrearing that got educator Chen Heqin into trouble with the Communist Party were foundational to the

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[15] Schneider, *Keeping the Nation's House*, 182-86.

Home Movement.[16] All the Home Committee's openness to cooperation with the new regime and willingness to repudiate their international connections may not have been enough when their organization took family-centric approaches that sent the wrong political signals to the Communist Party.

Though it disappeared in China, the Christianize the Home movement did not die. Transnational connections forged in IMC conferences, especially the 1938 Madras conference, laid a foundation for future work. In November, 1954, a conference convened in Manila, Philippines "to consider the problems of Christian family life in the changing East Asian scene." The conference was sponsored by the Philippine Federation of Christian Churches and the IMC, and it was called "a landmark in the family life programs of the churches of East Asia." Many questions that the Christianize the Home Committee in China had considered were addressed at this conference, including concerns about marriage, the spiritual growth of families, the best ways to nurture personality in children, and the relationship between church and family. The familiar names from the Chinese movement are absent from the conference's report; leaders like Guan Cuizhen, Li Guanfang, and He Cihong did not attend. The Chinese leaders present were from Hong Kong and Formosa. The names that do ring familiar from the Home Committee are those of former missionaries to China, Irma Highbaugh and Ortha Lane.[17]

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[16] Tillman, "Precocious Politics," 185-6, 191-2, 226-8. Chen was a contributor to the Christianize the Home movement. *ZQJX Jiduhua jiating weiyuanhui diyi jie nianhui baogao*, 17.

[17] Rajah B. Manikam and Irma Highbaugh, eds., *The Christian Family in Changing East Asia: Report of the East Asia Christian Family Life Seminar-Conference, Manila, November 2-16, 1954* (Manila: The Philippine Federation of Christian Churches, [1954?]).

The Communists' repudiation of Western personnel and ideas resulted in the Chinese efforts and studies being perforce represented by foreign workers.

A google search of the term "Christianize the family" *(Jiduhua jiating)* shows that this slogan has remained or revived in recent years, especially in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The concept of a Christian family, and of transforming families to make them more Christian, still captures imaginations. This dissertation lays a historical foundation for the concept of the Christianized Home and its roots in portions of Protestant society prior to the Communist Revolution. Understanding those roots gives us perspective on indigenization processes in Chinese Christianity and on visions of spiritually powerful homes and families that continues to resonate today in Chinese communities on the mainland and in the diaspora.

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