



[Birthday banquet-Lee family by Vivian Lee via Flickr.](#)

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The author begins by explaining “love” as historically defined by Mohism and Confucianism, that is, universal love versus love based on blood kinship. He delves into the differences between these two kinds of love, especially as they relate to family structure and authority as well as to extended family relationships. He then turns to Christian love, its relationship to these two ideologies and how it can influence the culture.

[The Decay of the Chinese Family](#)

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Ma Li

The stresses and conflicts found within Chinese families are increasing with urbanization that often forces families to live apart. After discussing some of the major pressures that families face in today’s China, the author delineates some of the principles needed for building a good family foundation.

[A Theology of Family for the Chinese Church](#)

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Li Jin

Due to the historical influences on family structure and ethics, many new Christians have no background for a Christian marriage and family. Sound doctrine and the ability to utilize the gospel to transform familial ethics are critical needs in China. In addition, due to a lack of accurate understanding of the doctrine of the church, there is a scarcity of guidance on managing the family as well as its relationship to the church. Li Jin presents the doctrine of the Trinity as a foundation for a Christian family

View from the Wall

[Families, Churches, and China's Transition](#)

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Wei Zhou

Historical influences on family structure and how this structure has collapsed in recent decades are reviewed. The author then recognizes that family order has been established by God and must be restored. This is essential for China’s transformation. The role the Chinese church should play in this restoration needs to be thought through.

Peoples of China

[Intergenerational Challenges in Christian Marriages: A Sociological Case Study of Urban Young Christians in China](#)

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Ma Li

Over recent generations, marriage expectations have changed. For young Christians in China, marriages are taking on new ethical norms that include challenges. Parental pressures in finding a spouse as well as in planning a wedding can create much tension. After marriage, child-bearing and rearing continue to generate challenges between the young couple and their parents. The one-child policy has exacerbated these difficulties. Christian couples are swimming against many secular tides in these areas.

Book Review

[Bringing Up Men of God](#)

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陈织娘的一生 (A Wind in the Door) by Mrs. Chong-Ping Tong

Reviewed by Brent Fulton

This uplifting book relates the story of Chen Zhi-Niang, an ordinary woman who raised six, world-prominent Chinese preachers. While her life was not an easy one, she learned to trust and obey Christ and experienced his leading in her life and in the lives of her sons. (Available in Chinese only)

Resource Corner

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Two online resources that share Christian marriage and family testimonies

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Items that require your intercession.

Editorial

Reflections on the Chinese Family

By Jin Li and Ma Li, Guest Editors

This issue of *ChinaSource Quarterly* focusing on Chinese families not only seeks to present the context of Chinese churches and their social conditions to English-speaking readers, it also invites self-reflection from Chinese Christians on what “family” means to us in today’s China. To the Chinese, especially Chinese Christians, the values and basis of family living have to be unlearned and then true values and basis learned anew in an environment where family values have disintegrated under the influence of various ideologies.



[Journal Entry \(Joel Montes de Oca\) by Chris Lott, on Flickr](#)

As a professor of ethics, Jun Wang discusses in his article the sources in China’s ethical traditions that have contributed to the disunity of Chinese family values. He ponders the key concepts of authority and love in the Chinese context. Sociologist Ma Li contributed two articles with analytical insights from fieldwork studies on how first-generation Christians, when forming new families, handle challenges in kinship networks and the larger society. Her first article provides some general observations and guidelines for Christian family living. Her second article gives some case studies of Christian marriages among the young urbanites. As an urban-church-grown believer and currently a doctoral student in an US seminary, Li Jin presents a theological thesis based on the Christian doctrine of the Trinity for anchoring the family and its contextual concerns in China. Independent writer Wei Zhou further engages with the discussion of how to rebuild family order in the church in China’s social transition.

We want to bring to your attention that most Christian believers in the growing movement of Christianity in mainland China are first-generation converts. Their birth families have contributed values and practices that these new converts struggle to unlearn. Meanwhile, Christian family living has been unfamiliar in their upbringing. Resources on this issue have been much needed. Thus, we also chose a book review on a biography of a Christian mother who raised five prominent preachers including the world-known evangelist Stephen Tong. This book has been well received in mainland China among first-generation believers.

We trust this issue will serve as a starting point for further reflection and discussion on how Christian families in mainland China can live as faithful witnesses of God’s hope, faith, and love.

Li Jin is a PhD student at Calvin Theological Seminary. Prior to seminary he was a PhD candidate in economic history at a Shanghai university. He has been writing on Christian thought for media outlets both in mainland China and Hong Kong.

Ma Li holds a PhD in sociology from Cornell University. Previously a research fellow at the Henry Institute of Christianity and Public Life at Calvin College, she and her husband Li Jin coauthored articles, book chapters, and recently a book on Christians in mainland China.

Intercessory Notes

Please pray

1. For Chinese families that must often live apart due to economic constraints. Pray that parents will find ways to be with their children and active in raising them.
2. For young people who desire to marry and want to find a mate who is also a believer.
3. For young couples who face family and societal pressures as they plan weddings and then desire to start a family.
4. That Christian parents would have the freedom to form families based on scriptural principles that follow the order and responsibilities for family life that God has given.
5. That Chinese churches would develop a scriptural theology of the church and how it relates to the family.
6. For churches as they create materials and venues for teaching young believers how to have a Christian family and raise their children according to the Scriptures.
7. That Chinese society would gradually be transformed by Christian families who are living examples of God’s plan for the family.



The Preeminence of Love in Chinese Families

By Wang Jun

The Dispute between Confucianism and Mohism: Two Views of Love

Two thousand years ago, China was involved in a debate about love that later became known as "The Dispute between Confucianism and Mohism." Mohism¹ advocates "universal love": everyone should love others equally. This is similar to the Christian concept of "love your neighbor" or "love your neighbor as yourself." However, Mencius was strongly against Mohist's idea and considered it outrageous. He labeled it as having "no respect for monarch or father; worse than beasts."

Confucianists opposed "universal love" because they felt it was contrary to human nature. In their opinion, human love is based on blood kinship, and therefore there can be different kinds of love. The closer the kinship, the deeper the love relationship; the more distant the kinship, the more shallow the relationship. Humans should love their parents and brothers more than others. If a person's love for his parents and brothers is the same as his love for others that goes against the understanding that a different kind of love is necessary for blood relations and ignores the parents. Therefore, this individual would be branded as having "no respect for his father."

In addition, Confucius advocated that a country should have a structure similar to that of a family. The monarch is equivalent to the parent; the people are equivalent to the family members. Thus, the people should love their monarch as they love their father. Agreeing with the Mohist idea of "universal love" means the monarch is being ignored, and these individuals would be branded as having "no respect for their monarch."

In this dispute, Mohism was not only defeated by Confucianism, but gradually disappeared. However, revisiting this debate today—which is easily done—the premise and logic of Confucianism are problematic. First, the Confucian point of view considers family kinship, which is a non-absolute relationship, as absolute. It makes this an inviolable, absolute relationship and considers it the primary relationship of all human relationships, even to the exclusion of the relationship between God and man. However, in doing this, Confucius ignored the origin of humanity. If an individual is created by God, then, the most important relationship should be between that person and God, rather than between any humans. In other words, human relationships can be transcended.

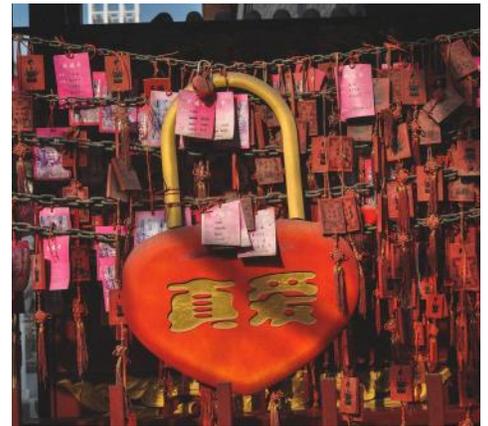
Second, from a logical point of view, the Confucian criticism of Mohism is also problematic. Loving others as one loves one's parents does not mean ignoring the parents; it also cannot conclude that it means "no respect for the monarch or father, worse than beasts." Loving others, just as you love your parents, means you have a more noble love, a love that goes beyond blood relationships. On the contrary, because Confucian love is based on a blood connection, it is not completely free from the animal (blood) level. It is a self-righteous and self-limiting love. On the other hand, Christian and Mohist love is more wide spreading, a more noble love.

Mohists advocate "universal love" because they claim that beyond their parents there are still spirits, so they are advocating minggui (theism). That is, because there is a higher spirit, Mohists achieve a more comprehensive love that goes beyond that of Confucian family relationships. At this point, it is similar to Christianity, although Mohist spirits cannot be compared with the Christian revelation of God since these spirits are basically superstition, witchcraft, or idolatry. Perhaps, because the Mohist belief is a confusing blur, their premise—which was superior—was defeated by the inferior premise of Confucianism. Not only because the Confucian premise was more successful than the Mohist, but also because later the Han Dynasty declared, "Dismiss the other schools of thought, revere only Confucianism," it became the Chinese people's ideology and achieved a long reign. Today, relationships within Chinese families are still of the Confucian "different love" variety. Universal love is not accepted; rather, it is ostracized.

Love, Hierarchy, and Upbringing under Confucian Ethics

Since Confucian ethics are based on blood kinship, they depend on family relationships and hierarchy. If the order of relationships is broken, ethics are violated. For example, loving others like you love your father is seen as an affront to your father. In a traditional Confucian family, the father is the maximum authority and most highly respected. All family members must obey him. Of course, he should care for his family members which is known as *fucizixiao* (benevolent father, filial son). Fathers are to follow Confucian ethics and order in bringing up their children so that they will know how to perform "rituals." "Rituals" are the regulations and guidelines for handling family and social relationships. "Different love" is the basis for dealing with relationships between one's relatives and outsiders.

It is not difficult to see the difference between Christianity and Confucianism. Christian authority and order are established in love, while Confucian love and order are based on authority. In Confucianism, because the father is regarded as the source of reproduction and is seen as the authority in life, he should be the most beloved and respected. This constitutes the source of family hierarchy. The father, fu, is first, then the mother, mu. Fraternal relationships are of a higher order than maternal ones. The father's brothers and sisters are called *bo/shu/gu*; their sons and daughters are called *tang xiong di/tang jiemei* (primary brothers/sisters). The mother's brothers and sisters are called *jiu/yi*; their sons and daughters are called *biaoxiong di/biaojiemei* (outside brothers/sisters). These titles show the differences in relational closeness. Relatives should be treated differently in behavior and etiquette depending on the relationship in order to satisfy the desirable "ritual." In China, traditionally everyone has needed to know these distinctions. If you understand them, you will be seen as an educated person; if not, you will be considered uneducated and be despised. Thus, in traditional Chinese family education, ethics education is the first priority, the so-called "teaching of human relations." Only people who know



these "human relations" are seen as real people. If they do not understand these basic human relations, they might not only be seen as uneducated, but could even be branded as "worse than animals."

Since Confucianism does not build authority from love but rather establishes a loving relationship based on authority, in Confucian ethics, authority and hierarchy are more important than love. Love is limited by authority and hierarchy and is different from Christianity's unlimited love. Love that goes outside the strict limits will not be praised and respected, but will actually be prohibited and blamed. In this sense, manners are more important than love. Therefore, the love of Chinese people is always very moderate, very introverted. They do not verbally express love because they are afraid it may go outside the rituals, and they will be ostracized by others. This is true of interactions between parents, children, and even couples.

Challenges and Hope: Moving from Limited to Transcendent Love

In modern China, due to the decline of traditional Confucian values and its hierarchal relationships, traditional ethical order and family upbringing have been abandoned and destroyed. The new era in China is seen as lacking love, ethics, and upbringing. While the original hierarchy and relationships have collapsed, a new order affecting relationships has not been established. However, as more and more Chinese have accepted Christianity, many so-called Chinese Christians are starting to think and practice the principles of Christianity. In this way, love-based authority is beginning to replace authority-based love and is starting to rebuild and revive relationships within the family.

According to the principles of Christian faith, the relationship between man and God has priority over relationships between people. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind," and "Love your neighbor as yourself" are the two most important commandments for Christians to obey. For Christians, the primary factor in relationships is love. This is different from the limited love of Confucianism. Christian love is universal, transcendent, and unconditional; it breaks all restrictions and barriers. People are free to love freely.

Of course, this does not mean there is no order within this transcendent love. It does not mean there is "no respect to father and monarch," the criticism Confucianism would imply since there is an absolute Monarch and Father who is the source of love. From his absolute love, we see a Christian worldview that espouses an orderly world, one that is favorable to the traditional Confucian order. Nevertheless, it is kinder and has more warmth since it is based not just on authority, but on love. This love penetrates relationships, so that they do not seem stiff. Relationships do not become a barrier to love, but rather make love and order part of personal and social upbringing.

Establishing authority and order, while teaching children in accordance with Christian love, is the current family-building mission of Chinese Christians. Judging from the current status of their families, this challenge is great, as traditional ideology must be replaced. Although the old value system has disintegrated, the inherent influence of the traditional system is still great. Its ideas and behavior reside deeply within the Chinese people's identity and are an unconscious guiding force. Unless there is thorough confession and repentance followed by living according to the faith, people cannot renew themselves and overcome the influence of traditional attitudes and behavior.

In addition, pressure from the external environment is immense. People who have not accepted Christianity still live according to traditional values and try to coerce Christians to worship ancestors and the dead. They ask them for special care and accuse them of being ignorant regarding differing relationships and so on. They want Christians to return to living by the traditional ideology and say that Christianity is a foreign culture, a foreign religion. They use Confucian ideology to distort Christianity, accusing Chinese Christians of sabotaging tradition and of xenophobia.

Finally, according to Jin Guantao and Liu Qingfeng in *The Cycle of Growth and Decline on the Ultrastable Structure of Chinese Society* (興盛与危机——傳統中国社会的超穩定結構研究) and *The Transformation of Chinese Society* (开放的變迁) and other authors, politics, economics, culture, and ideology constitute a super-stable, traditional, Chinese society structure. In modern times, this structure has not failed or come apart; rather, it has been strengthened through a totalitarian Marxist ideology. These are the challenges Christians face in transforming the structure of Chinese society from an authority-based love to a love-based authority.

Chinese Christians have not given up due to cultural and political factors. Instead, they have found an even stronger sense of calling, because they see that God wants to use them. They have become blessings within the family and Chinese society and are increasingly aware of the progress of Chinese Christianity. They see that only true faith can change life, culture, society, and totalitarianism and lead them out of captivity—even as the Israelites were led out of Egyptian bondage by Moses.

¹Mohism was an influential philosophical, social, and religious movement that flourished during the Warring States era (479–221 BCE) in ancient China. Mohism originates in the teachings of Mo Di, or "Mozi" ("Master Mo," fl. ca. 430 BCE), from whom it takes its name. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy; "Mohism," Oct 21, 2002; at plato.stanford.edu/entries/mohism/.

Wang Jun is currently associate Professor of Philosophy at Southeast University in Nanjing and writes and speaks about traditional Chinese ethics and Christianity. He has authored several books, the most recent being Ethics of Reading.

Translated by Claire Huang

The Decay of the Chinese Family

By Ma Li

Modern Chinese families are playing out the scenes of a tragedy as seen in two recent news articles. The first one told of a rural family where a thirteen-year-old boy was left to care for his two younger sisters while the parents went to work in the city leaving them alone. One day, when the three were out of school, overcome with the exhausting care, the brother gave his sisters pesticide and then committed suicide by drinking it as well. The second article told of a city family in which an older woman lived apart from her husband for over six years as she alternated between caring for the grandchildren of her two sons. When her third grandchild was born to her daughter, she was shocked to learn that her husband had been unfaithful. The older man shamelessly blamed her lengthy separation from him for the affair and asked for a divorce. Under the stress of the marital crisis and physical exhaustion of caring for a newborn, the old woman, holding the baby, jumped to their deaths after her daughter scolded her over a minor matter.

Whether in the city or in the countryside, families are experiencing crumbling relationships, feelings, morals, and values. However, the family should be a place of strong relationships, a harbor of love and a place to nurture and nourish life. Nevertheless, we have witnessed numerous deaths—not only the tragic death of life, but even more the death of relationships. Family life has become a dead, dried-up well and a grave for love in a marriage.

Rural laborers flock to the cities for employment, but the cities do not accept the responsibility of schooling for their children. This has led to lengthy separations in many families as children receive their schooling in their parents' rural villages. Spouses living apart from each other and grandparents taking care of grandchildren have become very common phenomena. Relationships within rural clans are broken up resulting in relaxed ethical and moral constraints. In recent years, there have been frequent news reports of older men sexually abusing young girls who belong to the "left-behind children" living in rural homes. In addition, those working in the cities sometimes return home with higher standards of living. This exacerbates the shift to materialistic values among rural families. In many cases, land division and implementation of this shift add to the conflicts in family relationships.

Herman Bavinck, a Dutch Reformed theologian, once said that the city is the family's enemy.¹ The work pace in an urban society, the high living expenses and a host of leisure choices all add to the crisis in family life and relationships. China is now tasting the bitterness of her much-too-fast urbanization. Following are some of the common cruxes.

1. **Marriage is considered a temporary contract.** An unmarried status and cohabitation are becoming increasingly common. Even among married couples, very few consider being monogamous for life. Divorce and extramarital affairs have become common occurrences.
2. **Parents ditch the responsibility of rearing their children.** Young parents doing business in cities often send their new-born babies off to their parents to raise them. Upon reaching kindergarten age, they are then handed over to the schools. These parents rarely invest any time in the upbringing of their young children in their earlier years. The parent-child relationship will then, of course, have many problems.
3. **Education becomes highly utilitarian.** Since most young parents are themselves products of a utilitarian education, they are industry oriented. This same mindset is then passed on to the next generation. Familiar with the competitive environment of the city, it is difficult for them not to compare the various educational options for their children from an investment standpoint. They spend money on their children beginning at a young age to ensure they are not behind others materialistically. Expensive, early educational centers in large cities are a growing industry. It is a manifestation of the problem.
4. **Commercialization of family relations.** The traditional Chinese family functioned as a means for passing on values and sharing feelings. However, increasingly the interactions among modern, urban family members lack a connection in spirit and in mind. Rather, their interactions are filled with commercialism and other materialistic symbols. Examples can be seen in the conversations around the family dinner table at traditional festivals. Relatives and families talk about their wages and other materialistic topics; their conversation is less about deeper, relational issues.

Christians in mainland China who are becoming young parents find themselves swimming against all these tides. Many are affected by these social norms and live in the tension of raising families biblically in this environment. Basic understandings of how a Christian family and family education should be structured are much needed for this first generation of believers.

The family is the natural place where the physical and spiritual growth of children takes place and where their spiritual, life journey begins. Because of the closeness among blood kin, spiritual shepherding within the family is irreplaceable. The blueprint for Christian faith is that family is one of the most intimate communities in life and in spiritual fellowship. Such fellowship can teach children to examine their inner self and open their hearts to both God and others. Children can also gain a deeper understanding of their parents' spiritual journey. With this as a basis, parents can talk freely about anything with their children and become their mentors and



[25677-RODSC_0181-DCF](#) by [neville mars](#) via Flickr.

friends.

Every house needs a good foundation; every human life and family does too. The following principles arise for building a good family foundation:

1. **Marital relationships that are in line with the Bible are the cornerstones of family life.** To a very great extent, the parents' marriage serves as a pattern for their children's marriages.
2. **Parents should bear the primary responsibility for teaching their own children.** The Bible clearly states that God entrusted children to their parents for them to "produce godly seeds." That is the goal of education. Only parents can assume the role of engineering their children's souls because God commissioned them to do so.
3. **Rearing children needs to be according to God's law.** One aspect of teaching one's children is to help them understand humanity and know that God's law has been inscribed on the human heart. Children need to understand that mankind has strayed from God's law; however, the Holy Spirit works to revive mankind. Their teaching should also include a holistic understanding of Christian ethics and worldview.
4. **Quality family life and leisure time as well as everyday conversation between parents and children are very important.** Parents' hobbies and conversations about their interests will contribute to the family lifestyle and atmosphere.

Let us return to the cases cited at the beginning of this article. If parents would comply with the law of God, and especially if rural parents would assume the responsibility for rearing their children until they are grown, then they would not burden a 13-year-old child with caring for his younger siblings—which led to the tragic outcome reported by the media. If the couple in the city had abided by God's law and cared for their elderly parent, they would not have depended on her to toil and care for her young grandchildren for years. If they had followed God's law, their parents would not have been living apart, the older woman would not have let her husband fall into temptation that resulted in an affair after their long marriage.

According to the Bible, the first human family was established by God. God did not leave this first family without his guidance. Rather, he enacted the law for family which is God's precepts and the gospel that gives true life to man. Christ fulfills God's law by his sacrificial love for the church, revealing the greatest mystery of human marriage—the union of Christ and the church. The purpose of this law-gospel is to give life to mankind, not just so that people will live, reproduce and multiply, but more importantly, that their family ties will be living, healthy relationships that glorify God.

¹ Bavinck, Herman, *The Christian Family*, ed. Stephen John Grabill (Christian's Library Press, 2012).

Ma Li holds a PhD in sociology from Cornell University. Previously a research fellow at the Henry Institute of Christianity and Public Life at Calvin College, she and her husband Li Jin coauthored articles, book chapters and recently a book on Christians in mainland China.

Translated by Ping Ng.



[Family Day by !11x16 Design Studio via Flickr.](#)

A Theology of Family for the Chinese Church

By Li Jin

Changes in family structure are a reflection of changes in a social system, thoughts, and ideas. Before the 1919 radical, anti-traditional May Fourth Movement, the Chinese were greatly influenced by Confucian thought that sees the individual, family, and world as three inter-connected, orderly components of the cosmos. They used this understanding to guide their ethics, religious life (ancestor worship and heaven worship), and civil justice. It is the individual's duty to take on responsibilities within the family; individual families are organic units of larger families, and this extends to the responsibilities of families in the world.



[Chinese family by Erwyn van der Meer via Flickr.](#)

Since 1949, from economical and ideological standpoints, Communism has considered the structure of large families counter-revolutionary. Socialist reforms changed Chinese families into fragmented, individual units which were then integrated into the state apparatus. In the cities, families were a part of the workplace system; in the countryside, they belonged to production teams and communes. Familial influence over individuals was transformed into something that carried political flavor as household status would determine a series of individual matters such as schooling, employment, applications for various things, marriage, and so on.

Since the 1980s, families have gradually broken away from the slowly collapsing, workplace system and become independent societal and economical units. Family planning policy defined family as a household of three. Due to materialistic education over a long period of time and the wave of commercialization that followed, an economic foundation was often treated as the condition for marriage. Furthermore, familial ethics once again underwent changes. The Tiananmen Square protests led to a breakdown of Communist ethics, along with an ideology that placed money above everything else, extreme individualism, and utilitarianism. All these continue to buffet Chinese families. One of the challenges the rising Chinese church faces is how to find a suitable theological foundation that provides teaching in family matters to combat these difficulties and new ideologies.

The Gospel and the Family

Around the year 2000, the number of people attending church in China greatly increased. Chinese churches, especially those in urban settings, began facing new challenges in multiple areas.

First, the majority of Chinese Christians are first-generation believers, many of whom grew up in atheistic families before being converted to Christ. As a result, adjusting the relationship between faith and one's birth family, as well as establishing a Christian family as an adult are things that this new generation of Christians has never experienced. At the individual level, newly converted Christians face pressure from their families of origin, especially atheistic families. Some parents criticize their children for becoming Christians believing that being a Christian means they have become unfilial; their children have rebelled against Chinese tradition by having chosen a Western religion. At the church level, viewing the gospel as simply praying the sinner's prayer for personal salvation is one-sided; there is also a need to provide a holistic worldview to help this new generation of Chinese Christians know how to analyze and properly solve issues that surround family ethics.

In China, the issues encountered by urban churches and the familial challenges appeared around the same time. After the first generation of Chinese Christians (1980s-'90s) stepped into marriage, marriage issues unavoidably became the topics the churches would face farther down the road. No wonder the most popular Christian books are usually on the topic of marriage—such as Tim Keller's, *The Meaning of Marriage*, a best-seller on Amazon. With an increasing number of new generation Christians starting to raise children, Christian education has become a hot topic of discussion within Chinese churches. How to provide a sound, theological, Christian worldview of the family, and how to utilize the gospel to transform familial ethics defined by traditional, Chinese filial piety, are the two most critical needs in the theology of the family in China.

Second, there is a lack of systematic and accurate understanding about the doctrine of the church; therefore, the scarcity of appropriate guidance on managing the family and church relationship becomes obvious. Some churches hold the view that all Christians should be committed to the church. An extreme example of this view is the "Jesus Family," a native Chinese religious denomination which promotes the practice of members having everything in common, inspired by the life of the apostles in the book of Acts. This view leads to the belief that like believers, families also belong to the church and are within its regulations; the church is a big family made up of all believers.

The other extreme exists in some of the new, urban churches. Many first-generation Christians in the cities became believers while they were attending college. The campus fellowships have been transformed into churches that then consist of many young singles. These churches seldom have the ability to provide guidance to their married members, nor do they have the ability to disciple families. A new phenomenon resulting from these types of churches is that they provide opportunities for members to meet and date others. However, many married believers stop attending church services after having children because of the lack of discipleship and practical theology on family living.

Between these two extremes, most churches are dealing with the issues caused by the tension between families and church. Churches need to know how to manage their relationship with families and how to utilize a suitable theology to teach and guide these newer

Christians, who were born and raised in an atheistic environment, how to establish families according to the Christian faith.

The Family Founded on the Doctrine of the Trinity

This article attempts to point out a feasible, theological perspective to serve as the foundation for the Chinese church to respond to these challenges. It needs this theological foundation because the gospel is being treated the same as individuals' proclamation of faith and baptism, because churches are persecuted, and because church leaders need more theological training in a fragmented religious environment. The perspectives built upon the doctrine of the Trinity and the image of God will help solve issues of church practice and will also help develop a contextualized, gospel-based Chinese theology.

The doctrine of the Trinity is not only the foundation of theology but also the foundation of the world; the three persons of the Triune God form the foundation of the world, society, and humanity. Individual people are a reflection of God's image; in society, human relationships should also be based on the relationship between the three persons of the Trinity. Seen from this perspective, God's three-in-oneness and his unified nature provide a way for us to look at people and cultures. As Dutch Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck points out, according to the doctrine of the Trinity: "The unity among the world, humanity, ethics, justice, and beauty all depend upon the unity of the Triune God. If there is any denial to the three-in-oneness or ignorance in acknowledging such truth, cultures will open their door to polytheism."¹ In God's creation, the whole, created universe reflects the nature of three persons in one God. Bavinck continues: "In the created reality, God's perfect image is displayed in his communications with the Son, but not entirely so with the created beings. Though the Son and the created beings are interrelated...if there weren't three persons in the Triune God, creation would have been impossible."

This theological foundation enables the church to properly respond to the challenges the Chinese church currently faces.² Humanity bears the image of God; therefore, in modern secular society it opposes abortion and relies on the gospel to transform relationships (especially that of "filial piety") and marriages based on financial conditions. It also promotes consistent values by establishing a society based upon families rather than transforming families through societal developments and political trends. Bavinck has well said that husband, wife, and children are one body and soul spiritually—an extension of the image of God yet filled with diversity in the oneness. The authority of the father, the gentle kindness of the mother, and the obedience of the children are precisely the reflection of the characteristics of three persons in one Triune God. For this reason, Bavinck stated that this three-in-oneness of relationships and functions constituted the foundation of all of civilized society. He wrote:

*This three-in-oneness of relationships and functions, of qualities and gifts, constitutes the foundation of all of civilized society.... These three characteristics and gifts are always needed in every society and in every civilization, in the church and in the state. Authority, love, and obedience are the pillars of all human society.*³

Based on the doctrine of the Trinity, the Chinese church can also rethink the relationship between church and family. Without a clear doctrine of the church, Chinese church leaders are confused about the differences between the visible church and the invisible church, and therefore appropriate limits defining the boundaries of each are lacking. From the Trinitarian perspective, God's sovereignty should be manifested in all spheres of life including the family. However, there is a difference between family and the visible church; the family unit is not a part of the visible church structure, and therefore, the authority to manage family matters resides within the family, specifically with the responsible family members. If we abide by this principle, there will be no misunderstanding regarding the commonality of possessions and the possibility of church leaders overreaching and interfering with family matters—an extension of the interference with family matters under China's planned economy.

On the other hand, families are not completely independent of the church. Faith is not only an individual matter, the church is concerned about marriages and raising children. It influences individual families by helping to sanctify believers in their spiritual walks. Even so, this does not mean that families must be subordinate to the regulations of the church. Ignoring this aspect in present-day China means that patriarchal church leadership is similar to what was known as the government's public power. This leads to the abuse of authority.

Conclusion

The traditional order of a Chinese family is based on the authority of the father. After this was demolished in the socialist movement, the workplace system caused people to treat families as part of the economic society. However, if we stand on the foundation of the doctrine of the Trinity, the characteristic of love within the family and orderly fellowship will be renewed. Both will benefit the church and provide Christian ethics—a desperately needed resource so that Christian ethics will replace socialistic value ideology.

¹ Herman Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p.158.

² Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 2, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), p. 420.

³ Herman Bavinck, *The Christian Family*. Translated by Nelson D. Kloosterman, (Grand Rapids: Christian's Library Press, 2012), p.8.

Li Jin is a PhD student at Calvin Theological Seminary. Prior to seminary he was a PhD candidate in economic history at a Shanghai university. He has been writing on Christian thought for media outlets both in mainland China and Hong Kong.

Translated by Hannah Renstrom.

View from the Wall

Families, Churches, and China's Transition

By Wei Zhou

Since the Communist Party seized power in 1949, Chinese family order has been severely shattered. The communist movement has pursued not just political but also social revolution. The family, the foundation of the entire social structure, could not avoid the revolutionary storm.

Friedrich Engel, in his book *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State*, asserts the theory about family that is the most famous in communist ideology. Engel argues that the family simply reflects economic relationships; the commitment and stability obligated in marriage are a product of man's economic power. With the destruction of private property, the traditional family would cease to exist.

Therefore, China's Communist Revolution first sought to destroy the economic partnership in the traditional family. Since women had been treated as the vulnerable party within the family's economic relationship, women's liberation became an important revolutionary cause. Long before coming to power, the Communist Party had called on women to abandon their families and join the revolution in the city of Yan'an.

After 1949, the liberation of women took the form of active participation in the establishment of socialism. In the ensuing experiment in communal living, men and women labored and ate in canteens together. Child-care was also collective. The family structure thus suffered further damage. At the same time, large state-owned enterprises were established. Many people had to rely solely on the enterprises (state) in every aspect of their lives. Then, during the Cultural Revolution, the government encouraged family members to expose and inform on each other. The traditional family rule of "shielding relatives" was destroyed, and family ethics were in shambles.

With the destruction of family structure and the collapse of its ethical order, the family was no longer a refuge for individuals. Weak, **isolated**, and helpless, individuals were forced to face the powerful state directly. *Coming from this context, the restoration of family order is a must for China's transformation. The role the Chinese church should play in this is what we need to consider.*

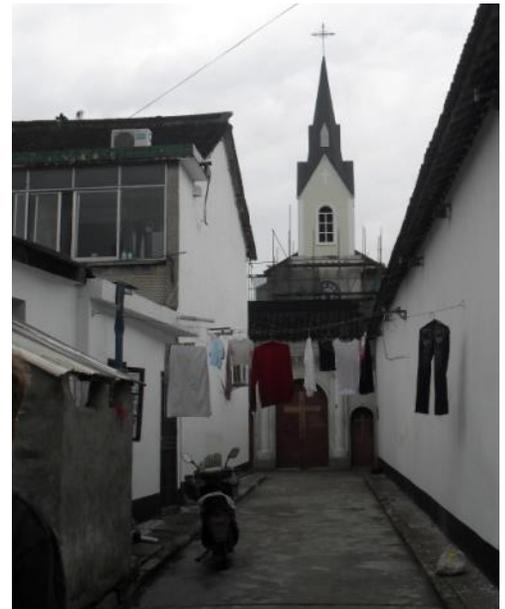
Christians have always ascribed importance to family order. For the Puritans, it was impossible to have good social and political order without a proper family system. Richard Baxter asserted that most problems plaguing people throughout the world come from chaos and dysfunction in families. Unlike Engel's materialistic perspective of an economic relationship, Christianity views the family relationship as a covenant. Marriage is a covenant before God. No other human relationship can be above the "two become one" marital relationship. (Genesis 2:24) Paul also stressed the wife's submission to the husband while the husband should love his wife. Such a relationship depicts the relationship between Christ and the church. Children are a heritage from God requiring parental care. A covenantal relationship is above blood kinship. Parents are to "bring the children up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4)

If family order were not established by God but simply a reflection of an economic relationship, then there would be no reason for wives to obey their husbands once they changed their economic status. This is the crisis facing contemporary Chinese families. Many women play the leading role in the family, a parental role that belongs to the husband. If this kind of role confusion happens in a Christian family, family worship will become confusing and disorderly. The spiritual condition of the family members will be poor, and the entire family will not do well. The situation becomes even more serious in Chinese churches where female members are proportionally higher in number than males. The confusion of roles in families affects church organization and leads to a series of problems.

For a long time now, ever since the Chinese government implemented its family planning policy, most families have had only one child. This has created a child-centered family order. The relationship between the parents and their child took priority over the husband and wife relationship. As a result, the relationship between husband and wife suffered a blow. Parents have been unable to establish authority over their children for training, teaching, and guiding their spiritual growth. Parents also spoil their children excessively and view them as a means to realize their own wishes. Children from such disorganized families will not grow into mature church members nor will they ever become qualified citizens for political involvement.

Values and ethics have been corrupted in contemporary China. Even if China can succeed in bringing about democratization of its political system, the restoration of ethical order and social structure will still be a long process. In reality, political, democratic transformation will be impossible without an appropriate social foundation. *The reconstruction of family order is crucial to China's transformation.*

The Chinese church can make a difference in two ways. First, the church must go back to the Bible to teach its members the truth about what it means to be a family. Second, the church, as a community, should demonstrate the heavenly order on earth as well as strengthening the families in its community.



[Qibao church by felibrilu via Flickr.](#)

[Continued at the bottom of page 14](#)

Peoples of China

Intergenerational Challenges in Christian Marriages: A Sociological Case Study of Urban Young Christians in China

By Ma Li

Youche youfang, fumu shuangwang. (Looking for a male who owns an apartment and a car, but whose parents are deceased.)
—Famous rhyming marriage market ad, anonymous

I am forty-two, have never been married. I am looking for a suitable partner who must be a committed Christian. This is the only non-negotiable standard. I don't think it shameful to marry late or not to marry.
—Marriage market ad by a Christian female, anonymous



[Shanghai park marriage market by thaths via Flickr.](#)

Marriage Norms and Social Change

For Chinese born in the 1950s, their primary considerations for finding a marriage partner included “political appearance” (*zhengzhi mianmao*) and the family’s “class category” (*jieji chengfen*). Family members and relatives functioned as match-makers. *Danwei* (work unit) cadres were often involved in formally introducing the couple and chairing unadorned marriage ceremonies, with the couple vowing to a picture of Mao. For the generation born after 1979, level of education, income and career paths became priorities when seeking a mate. With the disintegration of the *danwei* system, marriage ceremonies became more personalized to the point of being lavish. For young people born after the 1990s, sights are set on potential mates who own real estate and automobiles. A young man is considered unmarriedable if he does not own an apartment and lacks a good career. Among women, popular slogans like, “I would rather cry inside a BMW than laugh on a bicycle,” are embraced undisguisedly. These secular trends and highly materialistic mindsets are also exerting influence on Christians, especially young members of growing urban churches.

With Christianity spreading in China, marriages are taking on new ethical norms among the expanding groups of young Christians, although not without challenges. The two marriage ads quoted above present a sharp contrast between the popular consumerist values and the unusual but emerging Christian values. Different aspects of marriage and family life are restructured among young Christians, including matchmaking, wedding planning, premarital sex, childbearing and rearing, and bioethics such as abortion. Now, intergenerational differences have never been more noticeable.

Parental Pressure in Finding a Match

Remaining single is not encouraged in Chinese culture; it is actually considered a dishonor to one’s parents. When it comes to putting high pressure on young people’s marriage choices, traditional Chinese parents are in a class by themselves. Most of them grew up during the communist era when marriages had to be approved, if not arranged, by parents and work place authorities. Thus, they are prone to become manipulative when it comes to their children’s marriages, including the spouse, details about the ceremony, and even when to start a family.

Each Spring Festival, many urban-dwelling professionals in big cities return to their small towns or rural hometowns for the annual family reunion. A Chinese poem expresses the sentiments aptly as “feeling twice homesick on festival days.” For single females in the church, it is often the most difficult time when they again face the demanding pressure of parents who either rebuke them for their singleness or force them to go on arranged dates with male strangers. Someone even rewrote the poem as “being twice as forced to marry on festival days.” It is important to note that Spring Festival days already tend to witness more friction between young Christians and their families because it is a time when ancestor worship and other superstitious rites are widely practiced. By not participating, Christians are considered unfilial or disrespectful of their elderly parents. Such discord easily stirs up arguments about delayed marriage choices. The unique demographics of the urban church, such as its reversed gender ratio (more women than men), also exacerbate these challenges.

Christian Weddings

In today’s China, weddings have become times to show off achievements and to “earn face.” At some weddings, traditional elements are blended in, such as dressing up in traditional Chinese gowns and kowtowing to heaven and earth (*bai tiandi*) and deceased ancestors. Many families use the wedding occasion to collect gift money by inviting as many guests as possible. For most young Christians, extravagance and superstitions are things they want to avoid at their weddings.

With an increasing number of young Christian couples getting married in a religious context, more and more specialized services have emerged, such as wedding planners and photographic studios. Since Christians generally avoid extravagant shows of status and wealth, these services offer basic and plain ceremonial elements. Such simple style sometimes attracts an unbelieving crowd, which comments on the Christian ceremony’s “meaningfulness.” Sermons related to Christian marriage envelop the audience with an unusual understanding of one of life’s most puzzling dilemmas, and these often serve as contact points for later church outreach activities.

When 28-year-old Yuan presented his parents with his church wedding plan, they objected very strongly. To Yuan’s father, his son’s

conversion was outrageous, and a church wedding smacked of open defiance, not to mention a humiliation of his public reputation. Yuan's parents considered it shameful to invite friends and relatives to a Christian wedding. Arguments went on, and the wedding was delayed. Finally, Yuan decided to have a wedding without his parents present. "We are convinced that God has brought us together," Yuan says, "and I just want to give my bride a wedding." So the wedding happened as planned. Two days before their wedding date, a close relative persuaded Yuan's parents to be in attendance. It was the first time for Yuan's parents to step inside a Christian church.

Rearing Children Biblically

After a young couple marries, Chinese families generally see having children as another milestone, and this desire has been exacerbated by the one-child policy. For young Christian couples who are first-generation believers in their families, when trying to bear and rear children in a Christian way they face tremendous pressure from both families. In our fieldwork, we heard similar personal accounts of inter-generational conflicts in this area.

A year after their wedding, 27-year-old Yue became pregnant, but the blessings from both sides soon reversed when her first ultrasound at five months showed a major birth defect. Doctors informed them that if they decided to continue the pregnancy, the baby would need to undergo major surgery right after birth and then a few surgeries within the first year. Both sets of parents encouraged the couple to abort the baby. The doctor also told them that since they were both still young, they had a good chance of having a healthy baby in the future.

For over three decades, the one-child policy has significantly reshaped people's biological ethics, especially with regard to abortion. Because a married woman is expected to give birth successfully just once, many families optimize this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to bear and raise the best child. Prenatal screens are widely used to detect birth defects, and couples can discontinue pregnancies if they are not satisfied with the health (or gender) of the fetus. Since cohabitation is so common among dating young couples, many hospitals advertise abortions near college campuses and factories that hire young, migrant workers. Some billboards glamorize their content using romantic imagery and words such as, "Painless abortion, giving love the safest guarantee." Our acquaintances in China shared two examples that help illustrate how abortions happen routinely with little ethical struggle involved. First, a newly married woman aborted her first pregnancy because she had taken cold medicines when she was unaware of her own pregnancy. Second, a female migrant worker aborted her twins during the second trimester because she thought having twins would bring too much of an economic burden to the family.

When Yue told her parents-in-law that as Christians they would not abort the baby, they roared their anger at her. Every day the couple was bombarded with rebukes from their parents and relatives. Despite Yue's objections, Chao's parents and relatives took her to the hospital for an abortion. The pastor and members of her church rushed to the hospital just in time to stop them. In the end, Chao's parents asked the pastor to sign a written agreement that since the church insisted on keeping the baby, then it would take full responsibility including paying the medical bills. The pastor complied, and Yue was brought back home safely. The next few months of Yue's pregnancy were not without storms, however. Despite their agreement with the pastor, Chao's parents still asked Yue to consider abortion from time to time. But when the fetus grew to seven months, the doctor told them that an abortion at that point would harm Yue so much that she would not be able to have children again. After hearing this, Chao's parents stopped mentioning abortion. They had hoped that after birthing this baby, Yue and Chao could still get pregnant with another healthy baby. Since Chao is the only child in the family, they considered having no grandchildren too high a cost. After their change of mind, the stress of abortion was removed.

Differing generational expectations with regard to child care are illustrated in the story of Xin (28) and Yao (26) who married relatively early among their Christian friends. They were blessed with a baby girl after two years of marriage. Hoping to breastfeed longer and care for the baby full-time, Yao decided to quit her job at a busy accounting firm. Xin's retired parents, who lived in the same city, objected forcefully because they had expected to provide child care while the couple went out to work. This has become a common pattern among Chinese families with new babies—the grandparents care for the baby allowing the new parents to attain financial security through working full-time. Nowadays, very few career women give up their jobs to care for their newborns. Employers give short maternity leaves, and most mothers either wean their babies from breastfeeding at this time or have used formula milk from the beginning. In spite of the cultural trends, Xin and Yao believed that since God had entrusted them with the new baby, they, as parents, should take up the primary responsibility of caring for her. Xin's parents started to blame Yao for laying the financial burden on their only son. Two years later, Yao was pregnant again but Xin's parents urged her to abort the baby for fear of financial burdens. They also thought that having a second child went against the one-child policy and would result in a huge fine. Their domineering attitudes throughout the years eventually forced the couple to move to the suburbs in order to shelter their small family from these perpetual arguments.

Conclusion

In a country caught in frenzied transition like China, when it comes to marriage choices economically-driven and practical needs win priority over true love; parental involvement tends to muddy the waters even more. Within this cultural context, first-generation urban Christians often face even more complications related to marriage such as finding a mate, planning a church wedding, or starting a family biblically. Living out their faith as they make marriage-related choices often brings tension between them and their parents who have fully absorbed secular values and social norms. They must fight against social norms and kinship expectations. Married Christian couples also need to swim against many secular tides in bearing and raising children.

Ma Li holds a PhD in sociology from Cornell University. Previously a research fellow at the Henry Institute of Christianity and Public Life at Calvin College, she and her husband Li Jin coauthored articles, book chapters and recently a book on Christians in mainland China.

Book Review

Bringing Up Men of God

陈织娘的一生 (A Wind in the Door)

Reviewed by Axin

陈织娘的一生 (A Wind in the Door) by Mrs. Chong-Ping Tong. Available in Chinese only. Tujanjie Publishing Press, 2011, 267 pages; ISBN: 9787512606678.

Available at [Baojiayin](#) for ¥27.60 and [Ambassadors for Christ, Inc.](#) for US\$10.95.

Reviewed by Axin

Chen Zhi-Niang was an ordinary woman. Nevertheless, this ordinary woman raised six, world-prominent Chinese preachers: Chong-Ming Tong, Chong-Ping Tong, Chong-Shu Tong, Chong-An Tong, Chong-Rong Tong and Chong-Huai Tong. She was a woman abundantly blessed by God.

Chen Zhi-Niang was born in Java, Indonesia in 1909 to an immigrant family from China's Fujian Province. Her father was the owner of a local fabric shop when Indonesia was a Dutch colony. At age 16, while attending a school run by the Dutch, Zhi-Niang's parents decided to halt her education and married her to a businessman, a widower with several children. She objected strongly but her mother persuaded her:

You may not want to marry an older widower, but my child, this marriage is your best option. Yes, he is a much older man and his wife left him with several children. But you need not worry because he is a wealthy man so he can hire helpers to care for not only those children but you as well. Why should we marry you off to a young man struggling to start his life? Not only will you need to help him with his career, you will also need to keep his home! That is not what we want for you. Rather, we want you to live a comfortable and easy life. We've thought this over, our daughter. Please believe me that this is the best option for you. You must look at the benefits this marriage will bring . . .

For those who were taught under the Communist educational system, this marriage was obviously a business transaction based on financial gains, an arrangement that should have been fought no matter what. But Zhi-Niang did not do that. After some mild objections, she chose to obey her parents. While she enjoyed school and learning, this 17-year-old girl suspended her formal education and became the wife of a businessman 17 years her senior and step-mother of several young children. The year was 1926.

However, similar to the fate of many young women who married wealthy men, Zhi-Niang discovered that her husband had already taken another wife in his hometown of Xiamen at the order of his parents. Zhi-Niang was just "the other woman." But despite the pain and humiliation, Zhi-Niang once again decided to accept the lot life dealt to her. Amazingly, after marrying, the couple gradually fell in love and built a close relationship with much affection and mutual respect.

In 1928, two years into her marriage, Zhi-Niang followed her husband, Bo-Hu Tang, to Xiamen and began her life as one of his two wives. In December of that year her oldest son, Chong-Po, was born.

In Xiamen, she needed to learn how to get along with her husband's other wife and take orders from her domineering mother-in-law. She was forced to give away two of her children because of local superstition. However, although Zhi-Niang endured difficulties, the book leads me to conclude that she was mostly happy. Her everyday needs were well cared for and her husband truly loved and showed concern for her.

When the Sino-Japanese War erupted, Zhi-Niang's family moved to Gulangyu. It was during those more difficult days that they encountered Jesus in a remarkable way.

Zhi-Niang's three-year-old son, Chong-An, was gravely ill. No medicine had worked. Zhi-Niang just sat helplessly at his bedside watching him slowly dying. Then in came the person she least wanted to see—the mother of Jin-Bo, her husband's other wife. She wanted to visit the sick child. Looking at the desperate Zhi-Niang, Mrs. Shen said in all sincerity:

"We Christians believe that we can pray to God in times of trouble. We must tell Him our difficulties and ask Him to help us. Let's pray for your child and watch Him do His work."

Zhi-Niang's heart was beating strangely and all she could do was nod. She sat quietly and watched the two elderly women gently placing their wrinkled hands on the child's feverish forehead, turning his life over to this God who she did not know and could not see. She had never heard of people praying to this "Christian God." But they seemed to be talking to someone very familiar. . . . Their prayer calmed her worries.

That afternoon Zhi-Niang woke up startled and sat by the bed. This was the first time she had slept peacefully in many days. She scolded herself for falling asleep and quickly turned to check on her son. "Mommy," his weak voice tore her heart, "Mommy, I want some crackers."

This was the beginning of what became a renowned Chinese Christian family. Later Zhi-Niang testified that, "God came upon our home. It was that simple. Most amazingly He did it through Jin-Bo's mother—someone I thought cared about me the least. God used



her to reach me and my entire family to put our faith in Him.”

Around 1943 when Zhi-Niang was only 32, Bo-Hu became ill and died, leaving her with seven children. The oldest, Chong-Po, was not yet 17 and the youngest still an infant. Without their husband and father, Zhi-Niang could only look to her God. This woman who had enjoyed the good life for almost 20 years now had to face hardship. However, it was at that point that her inner strength and resolve emerged. She wisely maneuvered through inheritance disputes, fighting for her and her children’s rightful benefits. Getting through Japanese checkpoints, she and Jin-Bo’s sister, Jin-Zhi, conducted business on the outer islands. The venture did not work out but they were determined to make some money, so instead they decided to do hard labor at a construction site moving bricks. The money was not much but the experience gave her confidence in her own ability to care for her family and that God would bring them through. She knew she could count on him no matter what.

After this, Zhi-Niang opened a seamstress shop in Xiamen. Though the business was hard, she insisted on not working on Sundays. After testing her faith, God gave her an even more challenging mission. China was about to be transformed, and God gave Zhi-Niang the task of bringing his chosen men of God out of “Egypt.”

In the 1940s, a poor widow and her children set out across the Pacific Ocean to move from Xiamen to Indonesia. What made her go on this journey? *“A simple faith,” she said. “It was certainly a gamble, but a gamble based on faith in God.”*

The family settled in Surabaya and God began to work his marvelous plan. The first to respond to God’s calling was her son Chong-Ping. He went to the United States to study theology at the Reformed Bible College. Later, one Rev. Andrew Jiwen Gih came to Malang, Indonesia from the US to conduct youth gospel rallies where three of Zhi-Niang’s other children—Chong-Ming, Chong-Rong and Chong-An—all attended. Soon after the gospel rallies ended, Rev. Gih came to Zhi-Niang’s home.

Zhi-Niang was very surprised and asked, “Dr. Gih, are you having gospel meetings in Surabaya too?”

“No, Mrs. Tong,” Gih replied, “I’m not doing a gospel tour, but rather came from Malang to visit you specifically.”

Zhi-Niang had no idea that all three boys had filled out decision cards to commit to God’s work. The following frank conversation is recorded on page 220 of the book.

“You know, Dr. Gih, I’m a widowed mother. Several months ago one of my sons went to study in the US to become a preacher.” With slight hesitation she continued humbly but boldly, “We’re not rich. So how much is the tuition?”

Dr. Gih smiled—a warm and unpretentious smile—with sparkles in his eyes. He seemed to understand and did not dismiss her fear and humility. His answer was filled with comfort and assurance.

“I’m an orphan,” he replied simply, “and know how difficult it is to come up with the expenses. It is a battle. But I also know that oftentimes children without fathers have more backbone.”

He suddenly turned toward Chong-Ming and said “We can find a sponsor for you if you’re willing to enter the Southeast Asia Seminary. We welcome you there.”

This was the beginning of five of Zhi-Niang’s children—Chong-Ming Tong, Chong-An Tong, Chong-Rong Tong, Chong-Shu Tong and Chong-Huai Tong—committing themselves to serve God in full-time ministry. Let me quote Dr. Stephen Chong-Rong Tong:

I remember vividly at eight years of age that every day I woke up to the voice of my mother praying. I recall her telling me, “Because you have the fear of the Lord, I can take comfort no matter where you go. I don’t need to fret over you because I know you have the fear of the Lord in your heart. My responsibility is complete. “My mother was not highly educated, but was wise because she feared and honored God.

There are detailed and captivating descriptions in Mrs. Chong-Ping Tong’s book. You will learn about exotic cultures, the intricate relationships in an old-style Chinese family, the successes and failures of running a business, personal struggles, the effects of war, hostility among nations and life in a foreign land. Of course the book also describes familial love and the great love of the cross.

My hope is that readers of this review will be motivated to read *A Wind in the Door*—the story of a noble mother who raised outstanding children.

Axin (pen-name) is a Christian writer and also a NGO worker in mainland China. His recent books include Loving China with His Life: Biography of Samuel Pollard (用生命爱中国：伯格理传).

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Resource Corner

Sharing Christian Marriage and Family Testimonies Online

*Territory*境界

<http://blog.sina.com.cn/u/3213088323>

*Territory*境界 is a new media ministry available through the internet, especially via WeChat, a popular social media software. After being closed down once, they have changed their WeChat ID to: ijingjie

Territory collects and publishes Christian testimonies about marriage and family life that are widely circulated in China. They seek to provide:

- faith testimonies of the 80s and 90s generations
- articles on relationships, marriages, and families that have been healed by God
- testimonies from life in the workplace
- testimonies sharing about struggles, circumstances, or hardships, and how those challenges were overcome or how the believer learned to live and cope with the situation
- commentary on current events from a faith perspective
- testimonies and commentary dealing with educational issues, stories about parent-child relationships, and how children have influenced their parents

Recent articles include two testimonies, one of a young lady from the 80s generation and another of an older couple and their long-term marriage relationship.



即時通訊程式by Mike Lau via Flickr.

Shouwang Church Family E-Magazine

www.t2.shwchurch.org

Beijing Shouwang Church has published an online magazine for many years. They recently opened a section on Christian marriage and family living written by mainland Chinese Christians.

Recent articles include:

- “Live with Love, and Flee from Abortions”
- “Building the Family upon a Rock”

View from the Wall: Families, Churches, and China's Transition

Continued from page 9

We hope the Chinese church will play its rightful role in the reconstruction of family order to give glory to the One who established the family.

¹ Engle, Friedrich, *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State*. International Publishers, 1990.

² Baxter, Richard. *A Christian Directory, or, A Body of Practical Divinity and Cases of Conscience*, “Christian economics,” (or family duties). Vol. 2, Richard Edwards, 1825 p. 514.

Wei Zhou is the founder of First Fruits Reading Society and the author of various articles and a recent book, Thirty Concepts that Relate to Eternity.

Translated by Ping Ng.