

# Local Culture and Early Parenting in China

A Case Study on Chinese Christian Mothers'  
Childrearing Experiences

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Jun Yan

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Early Parenting | Christianity | Chinese Family  
Perennialism | Constructivism | Sinicization |  
Christian Families | Character | Moral  
Child Rearing | Philosophy of Education | Bible  
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## ABSTRACT<sup>1</sup>

With the increase of Chinese Christians born in the “post-70s” and “post-80s” generations, the issue of early childhood education in Christian families deserves attention from an academic standpoint in these days. This study aims to interpret the meaning of Christian families’ childrearing experiences within the social and cultural contexts of China. In this study, I did not intend to speak for the mothers; rather, I was eager to learn about subjective reality from those who construct it. Accordingly, the primary goal of the study was to explore the educational philosophy of Chinese Christian families and to examine how it influenced their childrearing activities through the detailed description of Chinese Christian mothers’ childrearing experiences. Five case studies of Chinese Christian mothers’ childrearing in a central city of Northern China were used as key texts. Data was collected utilizing qualitative methods including document analysis, participation observations, and in-depth, open-ended interviews with five Christian mothers and their extended families over one year. The study will contribute to the body of knowledge on Chinese Christian families’ experiences, which have received little attention from researchers. Additionally, it is my hope that the effort will yield results that will

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<sup>1</sup> **Key Words:** Chinese Christian Family, Family Education, Character Education, Moral Education, Christianity, Early Parenting, Case Study, Childrearing, Christian Education, Local Culture, Chinese Church, Perennialism, Constructivism, Sinicization, Christianization, Bible-based School

strengthen theorizing of philosophy for Chinese Christian parents and early childhood education.

Consequently, I found that the religious education of Chinese Christian families was implemented within the secular extended family and weaved in the secular daily life. Specifically, (1) the educational philosophy of Christian mothers was presented as the “Dual Educational Theory of Perennialism and Constructivism,” which I further named the “cross-shaped parenting philosophy” because of the dialectical unity of the two. Moreover, the process of socialization within and outside the home is continuously conducted conveying a dual cultural orientation of “Sinicization” and “Christianization.” (2) Christian mothers deeply believed in Bible-based parenting while in the real life they fulfilled it according to their specific situation. Besides family, they also borrowed the force of Christian community and Bible-based preschools. Overall, the nonreligious family education setting was of an open-climate. (3) Christian fathers played more supportive and cooperative roles in relation to the mothers’ childrearing compared to the non-Christian fathers. The latter might create obstacles or even cause conflicts for mothers’ faith education. The influence of grandparents for Christian family’s childrearing was found to have both positive and negative aspects.

## INTRODUCTION

All education systems are the product of educational value, and are bound to be restricted by their social foundation and cultural soil (Qian, 2009). In ancient China, it was believed that people were part of a stable, natural living environment. Accordingly, the unity of family-nation and their own kinship standard formed, which made Confucian education occupy the dominant position in people's minds (Wang, 2011). In contemporary China, after the reform and open-up policy, the exam-oriented education system stimulated by Instrumentalism and Utilitarianism of the market economy prevailed (Qian, 2009; Liu, 2007). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Christianity,<sup>2</sup> from the perspective of religion, has been regarded as a new critical cultural factor for education.

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<sup>2</sup> A lot of people called Christianity a Western Religion. It happens in both domestic and external China; their reason is that eastern values, principles and cultural settings are originally from Christianity. According to this logic, Chinese Christian family is under the influence of the Western Christian family mode. Nevertheless, this research does not confuse Christian values with the Western culture. Rather, this research regards Christianity as a supranational common value, and therefore Christianity belongs to the whole world, not the private property of the Western world, that is to say, just like the Western Christian world, the Eastern Christian world is trying to integrate and practice Christian ethics with their local culture.



According to Max Weber (quoted in Tong, 2012), the development of the Western world is closely related to Christian ethics while the influence of Christianity is not only on the world of the West but on the East (An, 2014). In Western society, Christian values have been well accommodated in all the aspects of society. In America, for instance, 80% of family education is presented to be Christian (Guttek, 2005). In this regard, sociologists and economists have found the answers through the research on spiritual capital (Bourdieu, 1990),<sup>3</sup> which is to be seen as one of the driving forces behind Christian family education wellbeing inherited by the West. In China, since the spread of Nestorianism in the Tang Dynasty, Christianity has lasted for 1500 years. It has continuously influenced Chinese culture and has been mutually influenced by it in turn. What's more, it has come to the forefront as a new social factor in today's China and is playing an immeasurable role in Chinese family education.<sup>4</sup> In that respect, what is the relationship between Christianity and Chinese Confucian culture since Confucianism has been regarded as representative of traditional Chinese culture (Meng, 2009; He, 2007)? Specifically, how does Christian value affect the real childrearing lives of Christian families in contemporary China? The essence of these questions is the research on localization of Christian education in the case of China. In fact, today's Chinese family education is undergoing a transformation: Confucianism no longer unifies the whole country, but has evolved into a more complex "Chinese cultural paradigm" in which both the traditional Confucianism and modern globalization coexist (He, 2000).

Scholars point out the differences between secular and Christian education, such as that Christianity depends upon and believes in the power of supernatural forces that help to mediate the education process (Kwon, 2010). Accordingly, Christians' views of the world, life, and

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<sup>3</sup> Retrieved from Chen (2011) and Lin (2012).

<sup>4</sup> I will elaborate on the function of religion in the subsequent content.

value are totally different from non-Christians; their attributes and behaviors about family education are supposed to be different. Therefore, the premise of my research is that there is also a parenting difference between a Chinese Christian family (CCF) and regular nonreligious Chinese family. If the statement is true, then, to study the substantive features of Chinese Christian parenting and how they differentiate from the majority in China will be significant and necessary. The characteristic traits of Chinese Christian parenting, I believe, are also differentiated from foreign Christian parenting. In order to illustrate the above, I used Chinese Christian mothers' childrearing experiences as a case study to display the appearance of Christian family education. Through a series of qualitative interviews and observations, the lives of five Christian mothers and their families are obtained; additionally, accounts of Sunday schools, Christian kindergartens, and early education institutions are communicated with insight necessary so as to explore contemporary Chinese Christian parenting philosophy. Aside from pedagogy and anthropology, sociology, psychology, and religion (mostly Christianity) related to early parenting is applied from the perspective of a more comprehensive overview of the implementation of the status quo of early family education consisting of Christian parents.

## **2.1 Context of Research**

*Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from God.*

*(Psalms 127 : 3)*

In order to better draw the readers into the following research questions (cf. 1.3), I illustrated the context of the research. Specifically, I first shared my own parenting experience from the micro perspective as the starting point of the research background so that informants' inner

confliction could be better understood. Then I promoted to the macro level of the entire social background in which Chinese Christian families exist. In the end, the characteristic of general Chinese families in terms of parenting was stated.

### ***2.1.1 My Childrearing Story***

I am a Christian, and also a mother. I was born and brought up in China. When I was in my university, I came to know Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior and was converted to Christianity. This was completely unexpected. While in grade three of senior high school, I was selected as a probationary Communist Party member because my performance was always excellent in class. This was an extraordinary honor for a senior high school student at that time. On that trend, I could have become a Communist Party member when I was at college, as long as I reported my ideology to my mentor. After all, in China, only very few people are able to join the Communist Party when they are still on campus. I was really envied by a lot of my classmates. However, in my college years, my foreign teachers guided me to “another world.” Since I studied in a Foreign Language Institute, I had many opportunities to come in contact with foreign teachers. For many years, I have felt their distinctive values and have been impressed by their lofty qualities. I also found out that all of them are Christians. This reminded me of Jesus, who was mentioned by my grandma before. In the third year of my university life, just at the end of my experience as an exchange student in South Korea, I was baptized and became an official Christian.

When I was 29, I met my Christian boyfriend by chance during an international internship in China. I experienced some inner conflicts when I was considering whether to have a relationship with him or not. I was going to get a very attractive and well-paid job in a workplace near my parents' home. For almost ten years since I entered the university until finishing my studies abroad, I rarely had time to accompany my

parents. One of my relatives persuaded me that a boyfriend is easy to get but a good job is difficult to find, and compared to a good boyfriend, a good job is a permanent arrangement for a woman. However at that moment, I thought finding a godly spouse and putting biblical marriage first were much more important than finding a good job. So, I quit that job and followed him to a city which I was totally unfamiliar with. Eventually, we had our wedding ceremony at a church. Three months later, I returned to South Korea to continue my study as planned and while my husband was going to study in Ireland as a government-funded student. Unexpectedly, two weeks after I returned to South Korea, I came to know I was pregnant. Once again, I had to make a tough decision: study for my doctoral degree or prepare to become a mother. Should I choose my school work and quit this child or keep this child and quit my promising future near at hand? At last, with tears in my eyes, I chose to be a mother. One of the reasons was that I remembered what the Bible says, "...children a reward from God."

One year later, my son Immanuel was born through natural labor. I started my journey as a mother but had to stop my be-loved school work at the same time. Looking back at the past 40 months, I felt as if I had suddenly entered a completely different world. I transitioned myself from being a student to being a mother. In the past, taking responsibility for myself was just enough, but now I had to take care of a three-person family. Before, all I cared about was my studies, but now I must put my heart and soul into arranging basic necessities of life for the whole family. If you don't experience it personally, perhaps you will never understand the tremendous contrast and the hardship involved in it. Needless to say of the physical pain and exhaustion, the most unexpected suffering was the unprecedented huge mental pressure. The first two years were the most difficult; I was always in a state of self-contradiction. On one hand, since I believed that my family should be a

priority in my life, I initially chose to be a stay-at-home mother. I despised those mothers who entrusted their children to elder members of the family or babysitters. On the other hand, I envied working mothers since they are financially independent and had their own circles of friends. With unkempt appearance every day, I gradually lost myself and feared to let others know that I was a housewife. Inexplicably, I was full of self pity and often complained that my parents did not help me raise my son. I felt I was like a trapped beast. I have a lot of talents but I had no chance to use them. During the first year of being a mother, I struggled in my daily life and often felt aggrieved. Looking back to the time when I was pregnant, one of my mother-in-law's friends asked me who would raise my child in the future (since in China, most children are not raised by their own parents but by their grandparents). As a mother-to-be without much experience, I unhesitatingly responded that I would raise my child by myself since to a child; his mother is the most important person. At that time, I expected my child's arrival with much pride, hope, and joy.

My husband and I began to take my son to participate in worship and fellowship at church when he was three months old. My home was quite far from my church and it was really inconvenient to take such a young baby out, but I not only shared many parenting experiences when communicating with other Christian mothers, but was also comforted a lot. I felt really delighted when I saw some children singing hymns and dancing with adults exclaiming "Amen!" although they were too young to understand the meaning. When my son was old enough to go to a kindergarten, my husband and I unsurprisingly sent him to a Christian kindergarten. Finally, I picked up my school work and restarted my own life three years later. I labeled these past three years as "In Wilderness." Just as Moses, who became quite a different person after staying in the wilderness for 40 years, I felt that as for myself, many changes beyond my imagination had occurred, including the changes of my value

towards both my family and the world. Moreover, my husband has changed a lot as well. After being tested for several years, he has grown into a responsible and reliable man. My experience makes me realize that Christianity plays a vital role in my life, especially when facing motherhood choices. Why do I dare to join the small minority when most of the mothers around us deliver their children into others' care? Why am I sometimes still in painful self-contradiction? Do other Christian mothers feel the same? What is more, I also want to know the parenting concepts of Christian families; the special meaning of raising children and the role of Christianity in their own life as well as their parenting experiences.

This research started from the above curiosity. I wish to understand Christian mothers' faith, attitudes, and changes in their life under their respective circumstances. In order to know the general situation of Christian families better, I made a field investigation about local Sunday schools, youth fellowships, and couple communities and recorded them as cases, which led me to make a comprehensive description about Chinese Christians on the basis of some documents. Rather than maintaining the "invisibility" and objectivity of the researcher, the lines were blurred and my own experience played an important role in my interpretation of events.

### ***2.1.2 The Renaissance of the Chinese Christian Family (CCF)***

After China's reform and opening up, Christians are no longer a novelty, but spring up more and more as a rookie with the driving impetus (Yang, 2004; 2009). The growth of the first generation that was born after the reform and opening policy is a hot issue among scholars in different fields. (Chinese Christian parents of After-70s and -80s

Generation)<sup>5</sup> Regarding Chinese Christian parents of after-70s and -80s Generation who grew up with Chinese R&O policy are referred to as “Faith First Generation” Their children on the other hand are called “Faith Second Generation (FSG)” an inspiration from “Rich Second Generation” which is a catchword in China currently. On the account of the status quo, there are no records about the Chinese Christian parents’ family education, whether in the churches, the research institutions, or from any individuals. This is due to political factors and historical factors,<sup>6</sup> and makes it virtually impossible to collect accurate first-hand data. In order to better describe the status quo of CCF, the study manifested the developing condition of the FSG of CCF through the investigation, which I carried out on November 2013 by interviewing the Sunday school,<sup>7</sup> Youth Fellowship, and Couples Fellowship of a local church<sup>8</sup> with a more than 100 year-old history.

For Sunday school, the research conducted by Francis (Francis, 1984, quoted in Argyle, 2005) has found that attending Sunday school can affect religious attitude and church attendance. Regarding Sunday school’s effects on religious attitude and ethical influence, other research points out that Sunday school is the main organization by which parents need to make their children know religion. The Sunday school in my field work was founded in early 2009, recruiting children

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<sup>5</sup> It is a sociological terminology disseminated by the public in China. “After-70s Generation” literally means the population born from 1970 to 1979, After-80s Generation literally means those born from 1980 to 1989. The former is the generation grown up accompanying reform and opening up and the latter is the one grown up after one-child policy, In general, both have their own distinct characteristics.

<sup>6</sup> During the "Cultural Revolution" special period, people dare not tell their faith, and the records of family faith education are seriously lacking. And the tension between religion and politics is still there.

<sup>7</sup> The predecessor of Sunday school was the nursery, which was restricted by laws and regulations, but later turned into a real Sunday school under the impact of Korean church Sunday school.

<sup>8</sup> This church was built more than 100 years ago, and there are almost 30,000 people, half of which are stable members who belonged to a state-registered Presbyterian Church.

generally from age 1 to 18. And I was told that every Sunday the number of attending children is between 180 to 200. Among them, children from 1 to 5 years old should be accompanied by their parents during Sunday school activities. Children over 18 years old should go to the youth group activities. During weekdays, parents commit their children to the teachers. Sunday school students' parents go to church in these churches. Some of them will attend church service. The Sunday school's teachers are from the church's believers, most of whom attend as volunteers. The teachers' children will also attend the Sunday school. The youth group activities were founded in 2005 and it have 1 or 2 activities each week. Youth Fellowship was established around 2005, and activities are held 1 to 2 times per week, mainly attracting young people from 18 to 45 years old, among which young lovers and couples make up quite a proportion. Now, the number is near 400, dozens of times that of the establishing year. A significant number of youth fellowship members also participated in Couples Fellowship. Couples Fellowship is a relatively recent establishment, set up around 2010 with activities organized once a month. The number of registered couples is approximately 500, and the majority are middle-aged and old members. After-70s and -80s Generation couples account for 8% of their children attending Sunday school.

In addition to the head, I also interviewed two priests of this church in trying to learn about believers' family status. During the interview, I found that one of the priests is from the first generation of pastors after the Cultural Revolution. As an experienced church wedding witness, he explained the changes over the past thirty years: "In the 1980s, when the church was just restored, the participants were basically elderly; young people were less than 10%. In the 1990s, young people are becoming more and more, but still the elderly were dominant. As for the church wedding, it was rather rare at that time, a few couples a year." Now our



church is more refined than it was, including such activities as Sunday school, youth fellowship, couple fellowship, and so on. The former church was without these gatherings. Preachers and believers are starting to pay attention to the next generation of faith educations. However, it hasn't developed very well; I lack the books and talents in this special field.

I also found that the number of people who are willing to hold weddings within the church is increasing, as are church groups such as Sunday school, youth fellowship, and couple fellowship. With this progress, from none to a few, from small to large, I have noted that the church and believers' religious orientations lean to marriage and family little by little. What is more, things do show that there is a tendency to pay attention to the cultivation of the faith education of the young generation. I believe that the historical evolution of faith is that the faith centers are changing from individual people to families, families that begin to gradually attach great importance to the faith training for the next generation. How to bring up "Faith Second Generation (FSG)" is the life's purpose for Christian parents according to the doctrine of "as for me and my house, I will serve the Lord." With the increase of young Christian parents, theoretical and practical requirements of the early Christian family education become increasingly urgent.

As follows, I will manifest the overall quantity of Chinese Christians. In China, there are five officially recognized religious traditions—Buddhism, Protestantism, Catholicism, Islam, and Daoism. And Protestantism, on Chinese title, is closer to Christianity, (Protestantism is Jidu XinJiao and Christianity is Jidu Jiao while Catholicism is Tianzhu Jiao in Chinese.) which is different from the general English system in that both Protestantism and Catholicism belongs to Christianity. Richard (2011) found that, in China. R&O policy is more than a strategy contributing to attracting foreign capital and management skills to the country; it also allowed the nation's elites

to exit the country and has forced China to tolerate social diversity, competition and the exchange of information and values within its cultural sphere. Religion has thus had the opportunity to resurface openly (Tong, 2012). While among all the religions, Christianity has grown at the fastest pace despite not being the largest group<sup>9</sup>, the transformations of religious belief and practice in China and the development of new forms of relationships between religion and society are part of global trends. After sixty years of communism and official atheism in China, the demand for things spiritual is significant. The Pew Forum's demographers think that the 2010 Christian (including the Catholic) share of China's population is likely in the neighborhood of 5% (or 67 million people of all ages), as shown in the table on this page. The study said that, Protestants total about 58 million, or 4.3% of China's overall population, including members of churches aligned with the state-approved Christians Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee (TSPM), which has roughly 23 million adherents (1.7% of China's population) and 35 million independent Christians (2.6% of the population), who are also classified in this study as Protestants. Also, the 2010 Blue Book of Religions estimates Christians in China to number about 28.7 million<sup>10</sup> (2.1% of the population) based on a survey (CASS) in 2008-2009<sup>11</sup>. This also fits the finding of Bays (2003), in which it was

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<sup>9</sup> Buddhism is regarded as the largest group one among the five officially tolerated faiths (Bays, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Because there are no truly nationally representative surveys of the religious affiliation of the Chinese public, only a rough estimate of the country's Christian population is possible. The US State Department estimated the number of Protestant Christians in China (both official and clandestine) to be close to 100 million in 2006 (Calvinists, Evangelicals, Charismatic, historical Protestants). The unofficial statistics, including those overseas, total about 70 million (Gao, 2006). Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life gave a estimated range of existing Christian population.

<sup>11</sup> The Blue Book of Religions separately estimates that China has 5.7 million Catholics, but it also acknowledges that this figure may be an undercount,

proposed that “Protestant Christianity has been a prominent part of the general religious resurgence in China in the past two decades. Today, on any given Sunday, there are almost certainly more Protestants in church in China than in all of Europe.” Furthermore, Christianity began to penetrate the high-class people and intellectuals in propagation structure in addition to the traditional vulnerable groups (Gao, 2005). Cao N.L. (2011) has presented a new model of Protestant communities and the state – that of the “Boss Christians.” In general, unlike in the past, the contemporary Christian communities have presented the characteristics of the “younger age” and “urbanization.” Meanwhile, according to the investigation by Yang Fenggang (2010), there has been a serious shortage between believers’ needs and religious faculty, so that “house churches” which generally exist in the countryside now have appeared in cities. Although it is difficult to estimate the exact number of “house church” members, overall it should be greater than the number participating in the Three-Self (Official) Churches (Gao & He, 2005) It is rather rare to find a foreign religion so welcomed by the Chinese people with such enthusiasm. This is not only an unbelievable phenomenon in Chinese history but also in the history of world culture.

**Table 1:** Global Christianity, December 2011

<b>Range of Existing Christian*population Estimates for Mainland China</b>				
<i>Source</i>	MINIUM PERCENT AGE OF TOTAL POPULAT ION THAT IS CHRISTI AN	MAXIMUM PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION THAT IS CHRISTIAN	BEST EST. PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION THAT IS CHRISTIAN	BEST ESTIMATE OF 2010 CHRISTIAN POPULATION
Chinese academy of social sciences blue	2.1%	>2.1%	>2.1%	29,000,000

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possibly because it includes only Catholics who attend churches affiliated with the state-approved Catholic Patriotic Association.

book on religion, 2010				
Spiritual life Study of Chinese Residents, 2007	3.2	5.9	5.0**	67,000,000
Meta Analysis by Global China Center's Carol Lee Hamrin, 2005	NA	NA	5.0	67,000,000
China Christian Council (2011) estimates of Protestants <b>plus</b> Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association estimate in <i>Blue book plus</i> House Church estimates by Liu Peng, 2009	2.1	5.8	NA	79,000,000 <sup>^</sup>
Asia Harvest, 2010	6.1	9.2	7.7	104,000,000
World Christian Database, 2010	NA	NA	8.0	108,000,000

The reasons why Chinese Christianity is growing so rapidly can be divided into internal and external reasons.<sup>12</sup> The former are related to the Christian doctrine that led to the missionary zeal; its continuous adjusting function played an active role on the social operation. External conditions are due to the powerful impetus provided by social change that rapidly facilitated the development of Christianity. First, since the reform and opening up, social views on religion have changed with the legalization of the status of religion. Communism as a faith is losing its position in people's mind; instead, the ideology of Christianity won their favor. Second, people's moral need is more and more urgent, which is due to the dark side of the society including issues such as the wealth gap, corruption, and other social problems. The crisis of moral illiteracy pervades today's society. The religious revival is the result of a "moral

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.mzb.com.cn/html/Home/report/399840-1.htm>

vacuum” left by the collapse of Maoist ideology and the ascendancy of amoral market forces (Madsen, 2011). In recent years, young Christians and intellectuals have increased, that is because they reject the ugly reality and pursue the ideal of happiness. The flourishing of Christianity has impacted China in a socio-cultural aspect as well. The so-called characteristic socialist culture could not provide a clear, specific, operable, and consolidated instructive system and ideology to the parents during the toddler’s phase of early education. Publicly, the instructive ideology is Marxism, socialism, and atheism, but their credibility and influence are continuously declining. In fact, the top-down movement of reviving sinology is a phenomenon of rescuing the leading culture which has lost efficacy. The materials in the markets are very rich at all times and in all over the world, and in various forms, but the disadvantage is the confusion caused by the mix up of different ideologies. Having experienced the emptiness of the spiritual world, it is understandable that people from villages to cities, from common people to university students, and intellectuals turn to religion to search for the “antidote.”

**Table 2:** Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life

<b>CHRISTIANS IN CHINA</b>		
	ESTIMATED POPULATION	PERCENTAGE OF 2010 POPULATION OF CHINA
Protestant	58,040,000	4.3%
Independent	35,040,000	2.6
Other Protestant	23,000,000	1.7
Anglican	<1,000	<0.1
Orthodox	20,000	<0.1
Catholic	9,000,000	0.7
Other Christian	<10,000	<0.1
<b>Total Christian</b>	<b>67,070,000</b>	<b>5.0</b>

**Source:** Global Christianity, December 2011.

All in all, Chinese Christian families appear to be thriving. Of note in this study, Christianity means Protestantism, and Christians means Protestants, excluding other Christian traditions if there are no special instructions.

### ***2.1.3 The Characteristics of Chinese Family Structure***

The structure of the traditional Chinese family has changed drastically over the past thirty years. today's China, under the influence of dual policies of reform & open up and one-child one, the traditional family structure pattern of joint family is increasingly replaced by the one of nuclear family (Yang, 1995). Demographers think that Chinese families in a traditional agricultural society are father-centered families in which vertical inheritance is upheld, while in modern industrial and commercial society, families become spouse-centered families that think highly of the spousal relationship. These two kinds of families have different foundations: one is the value of collective orientation and the other is the value of individual orientation (Yang, 1995).

Nevertheless, according to the study of relation between generations, although the young generation emphasize on the spirit of individual, they lack of sufficient independence of finance and household duties. As a result, they are factually dependent on the old generation. Especially after the birth of young generation's children, the characteristic is distinctly embodied. In Beijing, 70% of the children are under grandparenting (Li, 2008). Therefore, the structure of Chinese families could be seen as following the modern trend of nuclear family but still keep the cultural paradigm of joint family of Confucianism (Fei, 1997). However, the fruit of present Confucianism does not appear to be grandparents-centered but grandparents-needed in terms of child-rearing. This could be seen as the most distinguishing feature of Chinese parenting. Thus, most Chinese families are factually guided by the child-

centered ethic under the pattern of 4+2+1 rather than the ideal of spouse-centered one considering the coexistence of families where parents-parenting and grandparents-parenting.

On the basis of the above context, I attempted to explore the childrearing experience of CCF and the educational philosophy which distinguish with the general Chinese families as well as to develop the interaction of family members in terms of childrearing.

## **2.2 The Significance of the Study**

This research aims to explore the meaning of childrearing for Christian mothers and put their experiences beyond the level of individuals to restore them to societal knowledge and interpret their personal experiences in the context of society and culture. Unlike the previous studies, I focused the microphilosophy of individual motivations and actions of Chinese Christian families (CCF) rather than on analyzing the whole cluster of churches in China. In the process of exploring the educational philosophy of CCF, the parenting experiences of Chinese Christian mothers related to how they deal with their religion and local culture were examined.

Personally, as a Christian mother, I expect to find the solution for my own puzzle while exploring others' inner world. What is more, I attempt to illustrate the childrearing philosophy so as to disclose the substantive feature of how CCF differentiate themselves from major nonreligious Chinese families as well as foreign Christian families. In the interview, all Christian mothers said, "Childrearing is not only meant for a child, but for the mother." So to speak, the process of raising children is also one of motherhood-forming and nurturing. For mothers with children aged from 0 to 3, they were in the initial stage of learning to be a mother. Their experiences, feelings, and their own explanations for the experiences are of significance for pedagogy. The role of their religion, which is marginalized by mainstream society, in the process of child

rearing will be an important consideration in this research. The research has both academic significance and practical significance.

### ***2.2.1 Academic Significance***

Above all, it is my hope that the effort will provide much needed educational theory of philosophy for Chinese Christian parents. This research focuses on the generation growing up after the reform and opening up to the outside world, known as *80 Hou* & *70 Hou* in Chinese (80后 & 70后 means the generation born after 80th and 70th , respectively, the generation born after 1980 and 1970), through Chinese Christian mothers' own description, understanding of their experiences and their cultural and social background. Furthermore, this research aims to find out the educational philosophy, or the educational concepts of Christian families in China and disclose what their childrearing ways mean to themselves.

In academic circles, there is limited research on the special population of Christian family settings. Fewer researchers undertake studies employing pedagogy in this area in China. Therefore, this research also aims to make up the research deficiency on Christian families' individual experiences and provide fundamental data for future studies. Chinese Christian family education, as the object of my study, is an emerging educational power in Chinese society; moreover, it is a historic educational phenomenon. In this regard, this study attempts to add to the limited information on this population by examining the early childrearing experiences of 5 Chinese Christian mothers. Unfortunately, they have not been given due attention and concern in an academic way, not to mention empirical research about the experiences of Christian family education. I found in the literature search that most previous researchers have not considered Christianity as a particularly relevant



factor in China.<sup>13</sup> Even in the international academic arena, studies on CCF are often limited to the scope of religious studies or theology. There are few studies to interpret the context of its development from the perspective of education. This study is an exploration, or a new attempt towards pedagogy. I aim to arouse the attention of academic researchers particularly in this field, even to fill the gap to some extent. Studies on young childhood education and family education are both in the marginalized position (Meng, 2003; Zhou, 2010), thus I choose mothers who have 0-3 years of parenting experience.

### ***2.2.2 Practical Significance***

This study aimed to facilitate early childhood education of Chinese Christian family education, especially in the areas of early education and family education. It may not only contribute to the overall education (cultural) environment reflection providing education references for the macro-environment of China's education, but has a comparative significance for other countries. The findings will make significant contributions by providing guidelines in the formulation of educational policies to benefit childrearing in Christian families in China. Overall, my main concern is whether the social phenomenon explained can provide certain theoretical guidance and experience sharing for those who care about these issues or are in a similar situation. The promotion of qualitative research is achieved through the case recognition of the relevant personnel or theory deduction. In this sense, the practical significance of this article is to provide some reference and enl

ightenment for those who are involved with early family education.

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<sup>13</sup> As previously mentioned from P28 to P31.

## 2.3 Research Questions

The UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) suggests that “‘education’ is not all education activities of broad sense; on the contrary, it is an organized and continuous work of imparting knowledge.” “Knowledge” refers to a person’s behavior, experience, learning, understanding ability, and attitude, also to skills and one of their capabilities (not congenital or genetic) which can last for a long time. Giroux points out that pedagogy is a form of ideological and cultural production deeply implicated in the construction of knowledge, subjectivities, and social relations (1992). Accordingly, my core question regards what sort of “knowledge” CCF have implicitly and explicitly when bringing up their children. Deeply speaking, what is their educational philosophy? I attempt to find out the answer and the reasons for it through the portrait of Chinese Christian mothers’ childrearing experiences in their own voices. Dewey asserted that “education is the life.”<sup>14</sup> As compared with my own experience, at the early stage of parenting, family life is the center for both the babies and the mothers. Thus, aside from mothers, the roles of other family members and the mutual interactions with mothers cannot be ignored. My questions can be summarized as follows, and have guided the entire study.

- **What is the Chinese Christian Mothers’ childrearing philosophy that led to their educational behaviors and attributes?**
  - In what context is their educational philosophy formed?
  - What are the characteristics of the CCF education philosophy?

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<sup>14</sup> Zhao Xianglin and Wang Chengxu (2006). *Dewey’s Famous Works on Education*, Educational Science Publishing House, P 4 .

- **What are their actual childrearing experiences like?**
  - What sort of cultural and social interactions do the mothers experience within and outside the home related to their childrearing experiences?
  - How do the other family members influence and interact with the mothers' childrearing?

## **2.4 Key Concepts**

### ***2.4.1 Chinese Christian Family (CCF)***

Firstly, I narrowed the meaning of the family under the scope to the nuclear family, then, a Christian family is understood as a family organization composed of a Christian couple and their unmarried children. Aside from that, the importance of Christian parents to teach their children the faith is repeatedly stressed. The Bible clearly pointed out the responsibility for the parents to admonish the children.<sup>15</sup> The Christian family is not only responsible for their children's body growth, but also for the mission of faith training for the next generation. To distinguish it from the non-believer family, whether the family plays the role of transferring faith is seen an important measurement to define a Christian family. Therefore, I defined Christian family standards as whether the parental generation plays a leading role on influencing the next generation in faith and religion. If one party in the children's education plays a leading role, the family is predicated to be a Christian one- it is not necessary that both parents are Christians.

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<sup>15</sup> Deuteronomy 6: 6-7 says "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

From the perspective of the gender ratio of global Christians, the number of female Christians is significantly higher than male.<sup>16</sup> If defining a Christian family has to meet the requirement of both sides being Christian, it is bound to narrow the influence of the Christian family. According to Aikman (2003),<sup>17</sup> over 80% of Christians are female. Because of the physiological and psychological aspects, mothers occupy a special position in educating their children; they often play a key role in the growth and development of their children. In modern Chinese society, mothers often take more responsibilities for children's education in the family and their family educational concept has the greatest influence on the family educational pattern received by children. This makes the female Christians more prominent in education in China. In conclusion, in terms of China's national conditions, whether the woman is Christian is a vital element to determine a Christian family.

#### ***2.4.2 Christian Education***<sup>18</sup>

Christian Education is sometimes called Christ-Centered education or Bible-based education, and Christian educators believe that all truth and purpose for one's life comes from God. Therefore God and His Word must be placed at the centre of a child's life as well as his education. Education is an ongoing process until the desired result is reached. It should be noticed that this teaching approach is sustained, and attempts to seize every opportunity.<sup>19</sup> Thus, whether children learn

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<sup>16</sup> Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life Global Christianity, December 2011.

<sup>17</sup> As cited in Tong (2012).

<sup>18</sup> For the content of this section, if there is no specifically referential explanation, is basically from Deng Min (1993).

<sup>19</sup> Particular attention is devoted to the role of two key theological tenets — biblical "literalism" and belief that human nature is sinful. From "The biblical

what mathematics, natural sciences, history, society, literature, or the arts are, parents have a responsibility given from God, to do their best to determine whether the child is in accordance with biblical revelations arising out of Christian worldview to understand these disciplines. The ultimate goal of Christian education is to make the recipients realize the unification of Faith and Life in order to glorify God. Therefore, in this study, Christian education means the old generation's activities which help the younger generation practice the truth of the Bible in real life.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Five theoretical frameworks have been involved in this study. Firstly, the statement of the Transformation of Early Childhood Education in Socialist China aims at making readers better grasp the whole educational environment of contemporary China's Christian families in the horizontal direction. Specifically, three aspects of the policy evolution, cultural transition, and the development of the related academic research are illustrated in order to facilitate a better understanding of CCF's real situation. Tracing the development of China's modern Christianity and Christian education helps the reader to understand the relationship between the development of Christianity and Chinese society from a longitudinal view, as well as to analyze the profound influence of Christian education on China's national education. Thirdly, I utilized Early Religious Parenting because it provides a theoretical basis and support to prove that "Early Childhood education" has greatly important influence on the "religiosity" for children. What's more, the research in the field of psychology of religion deepens the meaning of early education in pedagogy. Fifthly, "Mutually Adapting Theory" is a theoretical interpretation of the relationship between Christianity and Chinese society which many scholars have resonance with. In the process of this statement, I combined this theory to view Christian education in Chinese society, or rather, the development of Christian education in China's social status. At last, the "Dual Education

Theory of Perennialism and Constructivism” which means Chinese Christian parenting is basically simultaneously affected by both Perennialism and Constructivism was presented as the author’s characteristic theory. The details are displayed at section 2.4.

### **3.1 The Transformation of Early Childhood Education in Socialist China**

#### ***3.1.1 The Policy Evolution***

In 1949, when the People’s Republic of China was founded, Russian theories and practices of early childhood education started to be systematically and extensively implemented all over China. Chairman Mao mandated a curriculum of socialism from the elementary grades to the universities and expected that—all children would perform at high levels and in similar ways (Deng et al., 2001). The concept of individualism was not acceptable even in early childhood education. Therefore, individual differences in curricula, teaching, and learning activities are not taken into consideration. The cultural revolutionary war which took place from 1966 to 1976 adversely affected the development of early childhood education, and many preschools were closed during that time (Shi, 1999; Zhang, 2008). The enactment of Reform and Open-up Policy that took place in China in 1978 has benefited the development of early childhood education tremendously as Western philosophies written by Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky started to be gradually introduced and implemented (Zhu & Zhang, 2008).<sup>20</sup> There are two legal documents that have had a major impact on program quality in the Chinese early childhood education and are currently affecting early childhood teacher education. First, the Kindergarten Work Regulations and Procedures was issued by the National Education

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<sup>20</sup> Retrieved from Bi Yinghu (2005), 40-41.

Committee of the People's Republic of China in 1989 as an effort to promote and measure the curriculum reform in Early Childhood Education (Zhu & Zhang, 2008)<sup>21</sup>. It emphasized the following aspects: (a) child initiated activities, (b) individual differences, (c) the importance of play, (d) an integrated curriculum, and (e) the process of activities (Zhu & Zhang). This child-oriented curriculum encouraged individualism and teachers relating to children in a more facilitating role. This conflicts with traditional Chinese cultural practices of obeying the elderly and authorities. Practitioners expressed frustrations in implementing the regulations due to a lack of practical guidelines. Parents also challenged the child-oriented curriculum as they placed a greater value on collectivism and subject-based curriculum.

On the other hand, in order to address growing concerns for the gap between theory and practice, the Ministry of Education issued the latest document of the Guidelines for Kindergarten Education(trial version) (Ministry of Education in People's Republic of China, 2001). These national curriculum guidelines reinforce the importance of early childhood education and describe goals and content in early childhood education in the five subject areas: health, science, society, language, and art. These educational policies also indicate that the Ministry of National Education is trying to develop the early childhood education system by infusing Western philosophies into Chinese educational theory and practices.

In order to reduce the overwhelming population density, China has enforced a one child policy throughout the nation since 1979. Being the only child, a Chinese child faces great parental expectations regarding academic achievement beginning in the early years (Xiao, 2009; Zong, 2004). The limited years of compulsory education provided by the Chinese government affect children from grades one to nine in both

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<sup>21</sup> Retrieved by Bi Yinghu (2005).



urban and rural areas. Prior to first grade, children usually attend early childhood programs called kindergartens, which are full day programs serving children ages 3 to 6. Prior to 1979, there were 56 days of maternity leave for educating the baby in China, and there were nurseries called *Yuhong Ban*, meaning a place to bring up the young elites. But there is not a full-fledged nursery system for 0-3-year-old babies nowadays in China. The education for babies under 3 is in the marginal area under the jurisdictions of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education. According to the *Guiding Principles of Educating the Young under 3* manipulated by the Ministry of Health in 1981, the educational goal for the nurseries is to “develop the students in all-round way including the morality, intelligence, physical health, and the art, and, to lay a solid foundation for bringing up the new Socialist generation with strong physiques, capable minds, and excellent virtues.” After entering the new century, the goal of family education stipulated in the *Development plan for Chinese children (2001-2010)* is to improve the quality of family education and to promote the educating capacity as to form a resultant force combining with family education, school education and social education to cultivate the “Youngsters with the Four Virtues.”<sup>22</sup>

### ***3.1.2 The Cultural Transition***

Anthropologists believe that the early socialization of young children is far more than the responsibility of the parents, rather, it is the task of

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<sup>22</sup> It is originally from Deng Xiaoping's statement about socialist educational goals. Jiang Zemin also pointed it out in 2001, at the speech on the 80th anniversary of the founding of the communist party of China, he said “cultivating citizens with Four Virtues is the basic task of the development of socialist culture.” As born socialists, young students from childhood throughout their education need to have the four virtues of good "ideals, morality, culture, and discipline." Retrieved from [http://hxd.wenming.cn/hxd/content/2008-12/22/content\\_13642.htm](http://hxd.wenming.cn/hxd/content/2008-12/22/content_13642.htm), sponsored by Chinese Central Steering Committee for the Building of Spiritual Civilization.

cultural survival and continuity, and the beliefs and practices of each cultural community in achieving this task are likely to vary considerably (Levine, 2007). Levine defines socialization as the intentional design of psychologically salient environments for children's development. According to this saying, a person's socialization process is the process of learning the surrounding cultural system consciously. First of all, the process need to conform to the cultural traditions, secondly, it needs to pass from one generation to another.

Chao (1994) promoted the development of alternative conceptualizations for Chinese parenting based upon Confucian cultural orientation. The predominant socio-cultural contexts of Chinese societies remain heavily influenced by Confucian traditions. As Ho (1994) describes,<sup>23</sup> in Confucian societies, the guiding principle governing socialization is embodied in the ethic of filial piety. This principle organizes and stamps the child's learning experiences. Among the filial precepts are: obeying and honoring one's parents, . . . and in general conducting oneself so as to bring honor and not disgrace to the family name. According to Weber (1951), the Confucian had no desire to be "saved" either from the migration of souls or from forming a personality which was placed methodically under a transcendental goal. The conservative nature of Confucianism was mainly due to its lack of a concept of salvation, which was presented as the pivotal element of Protestantism. Therefore, the typical Confucian practiced ethical behaviors to attain and preserve "a cultured status position," and he used this as an adjustment to the social order, as self-perfection, and above all, to fulfill familial obligations. Whereas for Calvinists, the systematic control of one's nature was a tool in the service of God that led to a mastery of world (Tong, 2012). As a result, Confucian tradition is reflected in social values, beliefs, and behaviors and sets the foundation

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<sup>23</sup> Retrieved by (Tong, 2012).

on which an understanding of Chinese socialization must take place (Wu, 1981, 1996; Yang, 1995; Miller et al., 1997; Fung et al., 2003; Yeh, 2003; Yeh & Bedford, 2003; Lieber et al., 2004, as quoted in Tong, 2012) with the strengthening of world integration, international cultural exchange is becoming increasingly frequent and deep.

However, Children's socialization practices are no longer limited to native nationality & country culture but also influenced, more and more, by global culture. Contemporary scholars generally believe that "localization" and "globalization" are a kind of alternative form for "post-modernity" and "modernity" (or modernization) in contemporary context (Bi, 2005; Cai, 2009; Chen, 2001; Gu, 2004; Gloria, 2010). M. Albrow (1990:7) maintains that, "Globalization" is a direct result of the interaction between "nationalism" and "internationalism," and is the indirect result of all the previous stages.<sup>24</sup> As a result, families and other immediate settings should incorporate the values of the larger culture and promote children's acquisition of specific values and beliefs (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Waller, 1938). In current China, parenting encounters both the *Confucian tradition* and the *global trend* inevitably (Li, "Simple Analysis," Qin Zhongying, 2010; Heng, 2007). I randomly selected a kindergarten (recruited children's are roughly from 1.5 to 6 years old) among early learning centers, according to its curriculum content in the recruiting booklet, I classified the courses as per two dimensions with traditional and modern as follows:

**Traditional courses include:**

- Etiquette Education, Chinese Characters, Abacus Calculation, Weiqi (I-go), Hard-Pen Calligraphy

**Modern courses include:**

- Oxford English, Orff Music, Taekwondo, Montessori Mathematics Class, Montessori Life Class

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<sup>24</sup> Quoted from the "USA" Roland. Robertson, translated by Liang Guangyan : *the Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, P29

**Other courses:**

- Dancing and Painting

It showed that almost all the traditional courses can be put with Chinese label and enjoy a certain historical continuity. The researchers themselves or even their parent's generation took these courses in their early years, but today these courses have a new name, the "National Studies."<sup>25</sup> From the enlightenment stage to the deepening one, all these courses are highly regarded in the whole society. While in the modern courses I can find some influence from all over the world, with countries like the UK, Austria, South Korea, Italy, etc., as for Painting and Dancing, I cannot put them into a specific cultural category because of a lack of detailed description, but presumably their content is a mixture of Chinese and Western.

Utilitarianism and instrumentalism which breed in a Chinese market economy should not be ignored on the aspect of orientating early childhood (Hong, 2012; Hou & Qiu, 2012; Cheng 2005, Zhang, 2001). In addition to the tendency of utilitarianism, "face culture" also plays a role (Yang, 1994). In the eyes of Chinese parents, children's academic performance is the most direct feedback about whether the education is successful or not (Zhang, 2001; Yang, 2007; Yuan, 2008). This makes the family education tend more and more to being utilitarian and practical; but this devotion to academic achievement means that they miss the real content which is necessary for children's growth and future happy life (Kang & Zhang 2005). The most intensive competition that measures academic achievement is the highly competitive college entrance examination. Pressures caused by such academic competitions make parents anxious about academic achievement as soon as their children reach preschool age (Tao, 2005, Xiao, 2009). As a result,

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<sup>25</sup> It means the Confucius works of Chinese ancient civilization such as *Three-Character Scripture*, *Di-Zi-Gui*, etc. The students are required to recite recently.

Chinese parents are more in favor of drilling and memorizing many verses of songs and poems as well as obedience to the elderly rather than creativity or learning through play (Zhu & Zhang, 2008). Unaware of the benefits of developmentally appropriate curriculum and child-oriented education theory, many parents request kindergartens to focus on academic subjects like math and reading (Hao, 2010). On the other hand, Chinese early childhood teachers, who are encouraged by the national curriculum guidelines to implement age appropriate and individually appropriate activities, struggle in daily practices since they are more accustomed to a direct instructional method of teaching (Zhu & Zhang, 2008). According to a research developed by Lu (2011) on parents' selection for children's books in China, traits of Chinese parents' selection for children's books can be generalized as follows: Firstly, many parents have problems about how to select proper books for their children. Some of them may chase after the best-sellers blindly. Secondly, parents with different education philosophy have different standards for good children's books. Thirdly, many parents hold a partial view of the value of children's books. They prefer to children's books about traditional sinology too much. To sum up, it is urgent for these parents to have some guidance.

Besides, the phenomenon of the responsibility of early parenting being transferred is very prevailing (Li, 2005). That is, parents' work is virtually co-undertaken by grandparents and babysitters. As a result, both parents' consciousness and direct participation in childrearing is lessened (Lin, 2012; Hao, 2010; Bi, 2005; Cheng, 2005).

### ***3.1.3 Academic Development***

According to *A Study on the Transition of Family Education in Modern China*, a study from Zou (2008), from the time after the founding of the PRC to the period before the reform and opening up, Chinese family education works give priority to translated writings, in

which as much as 75% of the total works in this period of time are translated and introduced ones, while most of the translated works are from the Soviet Union. Only one out of four of the works originate from Chinese native. After the reform and opening up, the family education works which originated from China account for 94% of the whole since the founding of the PRC. Monographic studies on family education mainly focus on the education for the only child, the vulnerable, childhood education in single parent families, the misunderstanding of family education and relevant studies in traditional family education, such as family instructions in ancient times. The publication of *Family Education*, written by Zhao Zhongxin in 1988, symbolized the introduction of the first works that systematically analyzed the theory and practice of family education, laying a firm foundation for the construction of China's theoretical system of family education. Another influential family education work is also named *Family Education*, published by Peng Lirong in 1993. It analyzes both theoretical issues and practical issues related to family education. It dialectically analyzes the problems that traditional family education and family education of the present age are facing in China. On the other hand, it compares the family education in China and foreign countries from the horizon (Zou, 2008). With the development of society, new situations and new problems that family education are confronted with have attracted more attention and studies from scholars (Zou, 2008). Therefore, it begins the prelude for the deeper development of the family education. On the theoretical basis, it draws lessons and quotes from education and psychology as well as taking examples by moral philosophy, sociology, ecology, anthropology, and other discipline theories.

I searched relevant academic materials on Christian family education by CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), in which it directly refers to a situation that, without exception, the Christian family

education is from a Christian official magazine *Tian Feng (Heavenly Wind)*. This magazine is of low value in terms of its academic level. Academic theses from colleges and universities are as follows: two master's theses, *Ethical Thinking of the Christian Family Education from the Perspective of the Bible* (Heng, 2011) and *Catholic view on woman, marriage, and family* (Li, 2006), both provide an introductory analysis of the ideas from the perspective of science of religion. The former one analyzes the outlook of marriage and family in Catholicism while the latter one develops the ethical thinking of the Christian family education from the perspective of religious ethics and endows it a positive sense. However, both of them are at the theoretical level and lack empirical investigation. In *Study on Christian Family Movement in the Period of the Republic of China* (Wang, 2010), the author, with secularization and Christianity as its theoretical framework, analyzes how the Christian family movements dealt with the relationship between them. It also analyzes the Christian awkwardness that China has encountered during its development when facing the challenges of nationalism. However, it is restricted to the reflection of the history and lack of realistic significance. In addition, *Influences of Christian to the women's Satisfaction for Marriage* involves the Christian women's understanding and current situation of the children's education, but it involves only a few contents. However, the monographic works, *Understanding Christian Education* (Deng, 1993) and *Christian Childhood Education* (Deng Min, 1988), originate from Hong Kong and Taiwan, and with a public history of over 20 years, they give a sense of distance from Chinese natives in terms of both time and space. *The Magnificent Christian Family* (Su, 2005) is a handbook of daily use with Taiwan as its background but lacks academic value.

## 3.2 A Brief History of Christianity and Christian Education in Modern China<sup>26</sup>

### 3.2.1 History of Christianity in Modern China

#### 3.2.1.1 The First Stage: From the Middle 19th Century to 1911; Namely from the End of Qing Dynasty to the Beginning of Republic of China<sup>27</sup>

In the middle of 19th century, following the signature of several unequal treaties, the Qing Regime was forced to admit the legal status of Christianity. Foreign missionaries, from Europe, North America, and Australia, etc., are able to openly go on a mission to China. The foreign missionaries had no direct relations with the expansion of the Western economy or the evasion of Western politics, but their activities were based on these unequal treaties. For this reason, the development of Christianity in China was more or less relevant to invasion. Meanwhile, Christian churches often strongly depended on Western church missionary societies.<sup>28</sup> The effect of this “umbrella” later became a main historical factor for the Chinese government, intellectuals and even ordinary people to oppose Christianity and the main historical background of most Chinese people’s view of Christianity as a tool for Western imperialism to invade China, Christianity was referred to as

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<sup>26</sup> For the history of Christianity, I mainly followed Wang Yexin (1940), Zhang Guangzhi (1997), and Jonathan Chao & Rosanna Chong (1997) for references while for the history of Christian Education, Sun Guangyong (2006) and Gu Yinghui (1994) are my dominant references.

<sup>27</sup> Some scholars regard the arrival of 1907 to China of Morrison, the England missionary mentioned later, as the mark of the beginning of Christianity (Protestantism). Here, I employ the opinion of Jonathan Chao, PhD and Rosanna Chong (1997) in that they see the middle of 19th century as the real sense of beginning.

<sup>28</sup> Prior to 1949, 89.5% of Chinese clergies received their salaries from a foreign mission.



“the foreign religion.”<sup>29</sup> Even in 2008, during the 8th National Christian Congress, the historical evaluation of Chinese Christianity in this period still remained as a “foreign religion that brought a lot of suffering to Chinese people and was incompatible with Chinese culture,”<sup>30</sup> even though, many achievements are still made in the spread of Christianity in China. According to the statistics made by the 3rd Missionary Congress opened in Shanghai in 1890, the number of believers reached 37,300 while the number of missionaries reached 1,290 at that time.

*3.2.1.2 The Second Stage: From 1911 to 1949; Namely the Republic of China*

The first ten years of Republic of China could be said as a “golden period” of the development of Christianity in China. In 1926, there are 2,340,000 Chinese Catholics. In 1922, there are 380,000 Chinese Protestants while the total number of Christians in China was above 2,720,000, over 20 times more than the number of KMT members. Mission were carried out by foreign missionary societies and independent Chinese churches jointly. But in fact, the priority was given to the former one while the latter one was just supplement. The New Culture Movement and Anti-imperialism Movement which broke out made the trend of Western rationalism rose all around China. Especially thanks to the May 4th Movement, the trend of science and democracy became popular in the circle of Chinese intellectuals and a big debate about religion initiated. Influenced by the then national conditions, the thought of “science being omnipotent” achieved an obvious advantage, which led to the rejection of Christianity. At last, the attitude of opposing the development of religions (primarily Christianity from the West) in China enjoyed an overwhelming priority. The specific

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<sup>29</sup> Jonathan Chao and Rosanna Chong (1997). *A History of Christianity in Socialist China : 1949-1979*. Zhongfu Publishing Co., Ltd., Introduction XI, Taipei.

<sup>30</sup> News of the Communist Party of China: <http://cpc.people.com.cn/GB/64093/82429/83083/6768964.html>

viewpoints were as follows: (1) Believing that the world is material. (2) Believing in the theory of knowledge which put science first. (3) Believing that there is not any absolute moral principle and rational choices should be made at any time. The anti-religion feelings of young intellectuals further promoted the Anti-Christian Movement between 1922 and 1927. Facts have proved that the true source of thought behind this movement is Communism, since according to Marxism-Leninism, Christianity works as a pioneer of cultural aggression for Western imperialism. And this view has occupied Chinese people's mind for the future three generations. Being vigilant about and hostile to Christianity has later become an important guideline *for* the Chinese Communist Party to make religious policies.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, in order to get rid of the image of being controlled by Western forces and face the challenge, Chinese churches started to make efforts to localize themselves and launched an independence movement. The Council of the Church of Christ of China founded in 1927 is one of the significant achievements made during that period.

### *2.2.1.3 The Third Stage: Post-1949; Namely the Socialism Period*

The development of churches is related closely to religious policies and religious organs. Chinese Communist Party's viewpoint about religion is a vital factor for the development of Christianity in China. Differing from the West countries' separation of religion from politics, in China, politics has always been above religion. Historically, the Chinese government has a tradition of controlling religion. Marxism-Leninism, Maoism, as well as Deng Xiaoping Theory have become orthodox ideology in a socialist China under the governance of Chinese

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<sup>31</sup> Jonathan Chao and Rosanna Chong (1997). *A History of Christianity in Socialist China: 1949-1979*, Taipei: Zhongfu Publishing Co., Ltd., Introduction XIII.

Communist Party.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the Communist Party will necessarily control and marginalize other cultures or religions, especially Christianity. Under the influence of the Party's calling, in July 1950, Wu Yaozong, together with other 39 leaders in the field of Christianity jointly issued the "Three-Self Declaration," launched the Three-Self Patriotic Movement, and called for the church to follow the principle of Three-Self, that is Self-Managing, Self-Supporting and Self-Preaching. From then on, the Chinese church is on the way to independence and self-governance. In 1958, Churches with different faith etiquette background adopted "Jointly Worship" and the Chinese church came into an era of "Post-Sectarianism" and Christian sects ceased to exist in China.<sup>33</sup> As a whole, the Chinese government adopted united-front strategies and moderate guidelines to make religious policies, but various political movements, especially the Great Culture Revolution lasting from 1966 to 1977 actually stopped the development of Christianity and even caused its regression. During this period, only house churches, which were out of the control of government, grew slowly and secretly. After the Great Culture Revolution, Christianity in China has experienced the progress from recovery to revival. Taking the Great Culture Revolution as a boundary, this stage could be divided into three parts. In 1980, the Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee of Chinese Christianity resumed normal activities.

1. 1949-1966, from the foundation of New China to the beginning of the Great Culture Revolution

After 1949, the Chinese government started to expel Western missionaries in a planned way. During the Korean War, many foreign missionaries got involved in cases about spying and anti-revolutionary

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<sup>32</sup> As it is mentioned above, the status of these thoughts has close relations with Chinese intellectuals' acceptance of the theory of evolution around 1920.

<sup>33</sup><http://www.cultursalink.gov.cn/portal/pubinfo/116009/20110530/03b0696ca0784b97981a8317d7e878ae.html>.

activities. They were often put into jails first and then expelled from China. Between 1950 and 1951, the Chinese government launched the Three-Self Patriotic Movement extensively, aiming to build self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating churches in China and establishing them as government approved legal organizations and centers for Christian activities. Until 1951, all Western missionaries left China and many Christians and clergies were arrested. In 1954, the National Committee of Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China (or “National TSPM” for short) was founded during the 1st China Christian Council. Worshipers across China should be organized by this Committee. Church leaders who rejected the opportunity to join the National TSPM or cooperate with the government were all arrested or sent to farms to reform through labor. Those who were lucky enough to escape from the disaster joined some underground “house churches.” During the Great Leap Forward Period, all churches in countryside were forced to stop their worships and fellowships. In 1961, the official Christian magazine *Tianfeng* criticized Sunday school. In this way, Christianity had been marginalized gradually. At the outbreak of the Great Culture Revolution, this hostility reached its peak.

## 2. 1966-1976, during the Great Culture Revolution

In 1966, the Great Culture Revolution broke out. With the call of the “Breaking the Old Four Movement” and the “Removing God and Religion Movement,” many religious sites, including churches, Buddhist temples, and Taoist temples were destroyed across China. Books about religions were also burned. In August 1966, all registered churches were closed by the Red Guards. During this period, all clergies, including those who joined the Chinese Patriotic Catholic Association were all put in prison or sent to reform through labor. Christianity in China entered into its “harsh times” and was nearly extinct in China.

3. From 1976 to now

In the later stage of the Great Culture Revolution, Christians in the countryside began to gather together to pray in secret and churches began to revive. Laws and Regulations again guaranteed religious freedom. In 1980, organized by the Chinese Communist Party, the China Christian Council was founded in Beijing, together with the National TSPM, it is called “CCC/TSPM.” This in fact guaranteed the freedom of official churches’ activities. The former hidden churches in countryside and house churches became more and more active. In modern China, intellectuals who have experienced the collapse of traditional Chinese culture then began to seek new forms of culture. Many of them chose Christianity. The market economy made many modern Chinese people throw doubt upon their cultural value system, and inequity in Chinese society made their trust crisis more serious. With overseas students returning to China and some missionary organizations from South Korea and the USA coming to China, more favorable conditions for reviving Christianity in China have been created.

Nevertheless, since Christianity entered into China with a status of “a foreign religion” and made some negative historical influences on China, while supporting Buddhism and Taoism, the Chinese government often keeps a vigilant eye on Christianity. Therefore, Christian churches are often in the situation of being supervised and suppressed. The official publication *China Religion* has pointed out that in China, Christianity should adhere to the Three-Self Policy, aiming to get rid of Western features and explore a kind of Christianity that not only conforms to Bible but also fits China’s national situation. In the interior of Christianity, the relationship between official churches and house churches is subtle and complex.<sup>34</sup> The former is more formal in

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<sup>34</sup> In the minds of the house church followers, official churches and the followers are not spiritual because they surrender under the leadership of the Chinese Communist party, which contradicts with biblical principles. <http://baike.baidu.com/view/294087.htm?fr=aladdin#4>.

institutional management because it obtains legal status; the latter belongs to illegal organizations, and is relatively loose in management. It is difficult to estimate the size and status of house churches because of the hidden form of its organization. However, some scholars have pointed out, house churches have obvious advantages in terms of flexibility of time and place, and proximity between pastors and believers. It meets the needs of believers either in rural or in urban areas, thus it is well-received.

### ***3.2.2 History of Christian Education in Modern China***

Objectively, from the end of the Opium War to 1949, Christian education had been an important element of China's education. Although with thick religiousness in its teaching content, Christian education focuses on teaching modern knowledge and capacities and spreading contemporary civilization as a whole. Since the location of Christian education is China and the educational objects, Chinese students, would serve Chinese society finally, Christian education had some positive significance and was widely accepted by Chinese people. However, modern Christian education in China was established and developed on a basis of several unequal treaties which were imposed on China by Western imperialism. This inevitably made Christian education in China strongly depend on Western church missionary societies. For example, lots of teachers in China's seminaries were provided for by Western churches; teaching pattern and teaching materials were imitations of Western theological education. Therefore, the relations between Christian education and traditional Chinese education are sometimes tense and sometimes easing. The typical research paradigms of Christian education are imperialism, impact-react, modernization and universalism. Before the reform and opening up, most of researches were inclined to imperialism paradigm.

4.2.2.1 *Historical Division of Christian Education*

Referring to Hu Weiqing (2000) and Chen Xuexun (1987)'s conclusion of Christian churches' experience of setting up schools in modern China and A. H. Gregg's *China and Educational Autonomy*, I divide China's Christian education into three stages.

1. The period before 1900 is the initial stage of China's Christian education

At this time, the strength of Christian schools was weak.<sup>35</sup> The establishment of the China Educational Association during this period was regarded as a mark of the formation of educational systematization. The Educational Association of China is an educational organization comprising some foreign missionaries in China, including many celebrities such as Timothy Lee, John Fryer, Young John Allen, and Calvin Wilson Mateer. Nearly all notable missionaries who engaged in modern Christian education in China are members of this Association. The Educational Association of China, which was founded in Shanghai in 1890, mainly focused on editing and publishing textbooks for church schools and seeking mutual assistance among church schools. In January 1916, the Educational Association of China was renamed the China Christian Educational Association which was in charge of working out educational policies, curriculum structure, etc. and guaranteeing all activities were sound and well-organized. This Association kept running until 1949 (Sun, 2006).

2. The period from 1900 to 1927 is the developing stage of the system of Christian education in China

In this period, the structure of China's Christian education was recombined and some Christian educators tried to get the dominant right of modern education. From the signing of the Peking Protocol to the

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<sup>35</sup> Form of Christian Schools' Increase in China (1922). *Xin Jiaoyu (New Education)*, 5(4).

outbreak of the Massacre of the May 30th Movement, Christianity welcomed its heyday in China. Christianity shifted its focus to culture and education and much attention was paid to cultivate successors who would spread Christianity in China. Before this period, Christianity had already extended into the Chinese mainland, but most believers were either vagrants who only wanted to get food or clothes from churches or ordinary people who were lacking knowledge and fell easily into temptation. As for society and politics, Christianity had no influence on them yet.

3. The period after 1927 is the transforming stage of China's Christian education, namely the period of the sinicization of Christian education<sup>36</sup>

The Massacre of the May 30th Movement caused a flurry of students to quit church schools across China and left Chinese church schools, which had run for over a hundred years, shaken-up and even facing corruption. At this time, Christian education in China had to meet the challenges of nationalism and reformation and also had to try to localize itself in China.

#### *3.2.2.2 Development Situation of Church School*

Christian education includes church schools, Christian newspapers and magazines, educational propaganda organs, academic institutions, etc. But in this dissertation, only church schools are introduced. Church school means all educational organizations that have been built by Western Christian churches since the end of the 19th century, including kindergarten, primary school, middle school, vocational school, and university. In this complete educational system, teaching content often comprises three parts: religious education (mainly teaching biblical

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<sup>36</sup> Cf. Sun Guangyong (2006).



knowledge), traditional Chinese Confucian classics, and Western scientific knowledge. During the process of generation, development, and extinction, church school has influenced the development of politics, economy, culture, education, science, and technology in China greatly (Sun, 2006). This is because in China, Western science and technology, cultural education, foreign language teaching, the establishment of modern schools, the compiling and publishing of textbooks, modern women's education, Western medicine, nursing science, pedagogy, agricultural education, sports, journalism, etc. all derive from church schools (Gu, 1994). In China, church schools were built from scratch. At the beginning, they only enrolled Christians, but later they also enrolled non-Christians. They also have suffered from many difficulties and hardships. The early church schools were often located in several classrooms. With such a small scale and as most of the students were from poor Christian families or even homeless, the teaching content could only reach the level of primary school. Since there were not enough students, church schools had to not only spare tuition but also provide students with a commutation fee and meals. Among those students, only very few were from Christian families, who went to church schools in order not to worship Confucius. With the development of Christianity in China, especially the growing demand for modernization, more and more Chinese began to accept church schools, since this was a place for systematically spreading Western modern science that matched with capitalist enterprises. Therefore, many compradors and businessmen also preferred to send their children to church schools. This trend has lasted until 1949 (Gu, 1994).

1. From the end of Qing Dynasty to 1949

From the 1840s to the beginning of the 20th century when the Qing Regime abolished imperial examination, church schools had an extensive and far-reaching influence on China's modern education. Church schools not only set a precedent for teaching modern science

from the West, but also displayed a new teaching method and a living example of Western education. This has become an important aspect of cultural exchanges between China and the Western world. From 1905, when the Qing Regime abolished imperial examination, to 1949, when the New China was founded, the main impact of church schools on China's education was training a great many teachers for modern education, offering a new pattern for running schools and promoting teaching and research in some educational fields (Gu, 1994).

On November 4th, 1839, Morrison School, China's first relative standard Western style school was established in Macao. In the middle of the 1870s, the number of church schools in China reached over 800, with nearly 20,000 students studying there. Most church schools were primary schools, but several middle schools also appeared at this time. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the number of church schools increased to 2,000 and the number of their students increased to over 40,000. More and more middle schools were established and even some Christian universities of various sizes appeared in China. The universities established by Protestant churches were St. John's University in Shanghai, Yenching University in Beijing, University of Nanking, Soochow University in Suzhou, etc. The universities established by Catholic churches were Aurora University in Shanghai, Furen Catholic University in Beijing, Institut des Hautes Etudes et Commerciales in Tianjin, etc. During this period, all churches in China put themselves on the record of China's Ministry of Education successively in accordance with related laws and regulations. In terms of the number of students, according to the statistics of 1930, it almost doubled compared to 1914. By 1937, the number of students in China's church schools had reached one million. It was evident that church schools had been thriving more and more in China. However, after 1937, due to the aggression of Japan, church schools stopped their

growth and struggled to maintain themselves. Church schools had to face many problems, such as being short of funds, losing a lot of teachers, and wandering students. Most church schools either stopped running or moved to some inner parts of China. This situation had not turned better until the end of the Anti-Japanese War. According to some statistical information gathered in 1941, there were over 1,000 Christian primary schools, 240 Christian middle schools, and 14 Christian universities around China at that time (Chen, 1987).<sup>37</sup> Whereas, due to excessive damages, China's Christian education has never recovered to the level of the 1930s.

## 2. 1949-1952

After the foundation of New China, the Chinese government adopted the policy of "maintaining original state temporarily" to Christianity, mainly reflecting in continuing to protect religious freedom and requiring the resumption of church schools as soon as possible. However, with the outbreak of the Korean War, this policy was totally changed. During the process of the Chinese government taking back its control over education gradually, Christian education descended to a target to be attacked and was damaged heavily. By the end of 1952, all church schools are compelled to be closed. Teachers, students, school buildings, and equipment were allotted to other national universities. All church schools are taken over by governmental departments or private organizations. In this way, church schools integrated into China's education system totally and gradually disappeared (Liu, 2003).

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<sup>37</sup> Chen Xuexun (1988). *A Brief History of Chinese Modern Education and Teaching Reference*. People's Education Press.

### ***3.2.3 Impact of Christianity & Christian Education on Chinese Education***<sup>38</sup>

#### *3.2.3.1 Impact on Modern Education*

In the process of education modernization, Christianity has witnessed in the Christian faith and injected new blood for the reconstruction of Chinese culture. Christian culture has enriched and affected the Chinese culture which facilitated China's move towards modernization (*Annals of Jinling Theology*. 2002). As Christianity entered and with the church school's opening, a new educational concept and system which was never found in Chinese history was introduced. This deeply touched the development of the modern Chinese family education. First of all, the modernization of Chinese education was promoted. Educators in modern China did not pay attention to science until the arrival of missionaries who brought advanced education ideas and schooling systems; all the Chinese people in different parts of the social hierarchy were able to accept the new education ideas, which narrowed the distance between China and the world. Chinese people first realized that there are also other forms of education besides family education. Many intellectuals began to use social education institutions to educate children. For instance, preschool children were sent to the church kindergarten; that was unprecedented in the history of China's education.<sup>39</sup> From the very beginning, missionaries looked high on the integration of Christianity and Chinese traditional culture. Second, China's real higher education in the modern sense was established. The emergence of church universities facilitated the establishment and

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<sup>38</sup> For this part, I mainly followed the references of Wang Zhongxin (1999) *Christianity and China's Modern Education*, Hubei Education Press and Tian Xuan (2010). *Thoughts of family education in Modern China*, a master's thesis, Zhengzhou University.

<sup>39</sup> Christianity in China (*Jidujiao zai Zhongguo Zhi Qingxing*) (1923) *New Education* (6)5.

development of Chinese public and private higher education. This set up a model and the basis for local Chinese education especially for higher education. Thus, the gap between Chinese higher education and Western higher education was shortened by hundreds of years. At the same time, the graduates from church universities offered faculty for local Chinese universities. Finally, the independent movement for the emancipation of women was promoted. The three major features of Church schools are “pay attention to the Bible, pay attention to English, pay attention to women's education;”<sup>40</sup> Church schools especially paid attention to the right of women to receive an education. These intellectual women first broke the bondage of the feudal shackles and obtained self-reliance in society. Christian women's higher education in China turned out the first generation of professional women. In addition, sending students to study abroad started with the institutions of Christian education.

### *3.2.3.2 Impact on Contemporary Education*

After the reform and open up policy, the state mobilized all positive factors to develop education; non-government schools were also encouraged to run. Under this background, Bible-based schools rose again as one of diversified education.<sup>41</sup> According to my investigation, these schools (including kindergartens) are spontaneously run by Christian folk organizations. At present, some schools are registered under the name of “art school,” some as “tutoring center.” Overall, they exist as a gray area. The specific forms are two. The first form accounts for most in China which consist of Christian family children who belong to different church; the second is close to homeschooling mode which consist of several Christian families on their own. In addition, some

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<sup>40</sup> Christianity in China (Jidujiao zai Zhongguo Zhi Qingxing) (1923). *New Education* (6)5.

<sup>41</sup> Based on the thought of atheism and Marxism-Leninism, the Chinese government doesn't allow for any public school aiming to spread faith, but nowadays it is possible if a school exists as a social supplementary education resources and adheres to the related law.

Bible-based schools are established by a single church, but they are an absolute minority. Second, these schools' leadership is under Chinese people rather than any foreign person, despite its foreign education mode and content. For example, the curriculum and textbooks of ACE (which is a completely foreign education style) is widely adopted. For the Christian parents who think highly of faith education, this kind of school can meet their needs both of the faith and academic learning at the same time; compared with public schools, Bible-based schools are preferred even more. However, restricted by law, Christian education is less religious in China, more foreign-style, is regarded as one of the Western-style emerging powers of education diversification by non-Christian parents. The bilingual teaching is welcomed by parents. Finally, in terms of the present situation, this kind of education is scarcely possible to be taken as the example for local education. At best, it exists to service minorities under the diversified education background; the course could not connect with China's public education. As a result, the graduates from the bible-based schools generally study abroad instead of attending the national entrance examinations. This is undoubtedly restricted by the play of their influences.

### **3.3 Early Religious Parenting**

“One can predict adulthood by looking at three years old experience” is a Chinese proverb. Childhood is a period to form the basis of symbolic system and value views. Scholars of early education have pointed out that development from ages 0-3 should be a critical period in the development of the whole life (Lee, 2009; Kim & Lim, 2007; Koh, 2004). Thus, the symbolic system and form of value in this period will play the role of a cornerstone impacting all future life. Because a person before entering the school, has begun to have the capability to judge the value of right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, good and evil. In later

years of growth, he in general will not change much. The current Brain Science and Life Science study suggests that the first few years of a new born baby is a key period of brain development, and at the age of 3 their brains are already 80% of the adult brain's size. That is to say that by the age of 3, a child's intelligence, personality and behavior have the basic formation and in later years there will be no big changes in general (Hua, 2004; Wang Yan, 2007). The first contact of new born babies is their parents, therefore, family is their first living environment, for children 0 to 3 years old it is almost all of the world. The family education received at this growth stage will serve as the basis of his life education, followed by the relationship with peers and teachers in the teaching education stage and how to get along with people in social education (Liu, 2008). Thus, the age range of my early education research will be in the infant stages of 0 to 3 years old, to emphasize the influence of early development of people on the development of whole life, and to reflect the importance of early education.

For a long time, the link between parents and children is seen as a kind of shaping process of children's behavior by parents' upbringing. The function of family parenting is to pass to the children the view of social values, behaviors, attitudes systems, and codes of social ethics by parenting (Hong, 2012; Cheng, 2005; Hou & Qiu, 2012). Bandura (1977) holds that children's social behavior is not a biological instinct. Rather, It is the result of observational learning and imitating learning through reinforcement. In that way, the children who are born in a family with a Christian background are, inevitably affected by their parents' religion through the daily narrative. In all human communities, social and religious concepts and practices are delivered to children though various ways. Whether a children grows up in Israel, Italy, or Kyoto, their religious ideas are likely to be the same as most of the others who live within the same area (Bruce & Edward, 2001). In general, the first and biggest reason for religious belief comes from of

family background. Because of family factors, children's understanding of religion is more intuitive, and because of visual contact and experience, the degree of identity of religion is much higher (Lee, 2009). Kinship and direct experiences are all crucial factors (Hsu, 1963). Religion also has a strong group tendency, handed down from generation to generation, grandparents phase by phase, with some family being Christian for two or three generations and the reason is obviously that their offspring became Christians (Francis, L. J, 1984).

Cross-cultural studies also found that God is also seen by children as harsh if parents are harsh and God is seen by children as friendly if parents are friendly. The similarity in the field of religious behavior between parents and children is much higher than that in many other areas (Lee, 2009). In the formation of religious attitude, there's no doubt of the importance of parents' attitude. In a survey conducted with students, the subjects are asked what the most important factors affecting their religious beliefs are, and among all the answers, "father," "mother," and "family" are the three most frequent (Cavanaugh, 1939; quoted from every Argyle & Beit-Hallami, 1996). And these results also are confirmed by the correlation between the subjects' religious belief and their parents'. Hay and Nye (1998) points out that all the informal research method for the young children shows clearly that those young children do have religious ideas and experiences, and despite being different forms, they can begin to pray at a very early age if someone teaches them to do so.

Erikson maintains that, for children, the early stage is a crucial time to establish their basis of the concept of human religion under the impact of their mothers within them if there is a trustful relationship. Even if some people might not be aware of it, their sense of meaning may be traceable to religious influences that are long ago woven into the fabric of daily life (as cited in Tong, 2012). According to Flower (1974), 0-4



years could be seen as the intuition projective faith. Characters, as formed in early childhood, plays a stereotyping role on the future development of children's personality, and the impact of early childhood education occur has a lasting effect even after children enter school and the society (Liu, 2008).<sup>42</sup> *A Survey on Religion and Religious Consciousness in South Korea* made by Gallup in 1997 shows that 57.3% of Christians share the same religion with their mothers while among Catholics, about 56.4% share the same religion with their mothers.<sup>43</sup>

In China, it is estimated that 80% of Christians are women; this ratio is approximately the same in the house church networks and state-sanctioned churches or networks of urban fellowship groups (Aikman, 2003), which even highlights Christian mothers' role in education in China. As a result, Chinese Christian parents, especially the mothers, should make full use of this period to get twice the result with half the effort for children's future education.

### **3.4 Mutually Adapting Theory: Christianity and Chinese Society**

Based on the viewpoint of the majority researchers, I utilized Mutually Adapting Theory, put forward by Dr. Xinping Zhuo,<sup>44</sup> which means that the mutual adaptation between Christianity and Chinese culture not only involves finding common ground, but also exchanging and incorporating new ideas. This is originally from the Comprehensive Theology, named by Ho Sai Ming,<sup>45</sup> who is a representative of the

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<sup>42</sup> Quote from a secondary source of Liu Guoyan (2008) P18-19.

<sup>43</sup> Observing Koreans' Religion from Number (2003). *Contemporary South Korea* (Autumn Issue), 95.

<sup>44</sup> 1955-, Academician at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, director of the Institute of World Religions, president of the Chinese Academy of Religion.

<sup>45</sup> Ho Sai Ming (1911-1996), He was from Shunde County of Guangdong Province, China, and he received the B.A. degree in literature from Zhongshan

attempt to formulate Chinese Christian world. His basic argument is that Chinese theologians should encourage Christianity to absorb good elements from Confucianism while the faults of Chinese traditional culture should also be corrected with Christianity. In such a way the two strong, exclusive cultures can become complementary to each other, leading to the success of both (Zhuo, 2010). Seeking similarities from one another has laid a foundation for Chinese comprehensive theology. He further points out, “There are two approaches to comprehend Christianity with Chinese culture and to keep Christianity in the leading position. One is to let Chinese culture go into Christianity to act as a tool to interpret Christianity, and I call this Sinological Theology. Another is to let Christianity come into Chinese culture to be corrected and reformed, and I call this Theological Sinology. No matter whether it is Sinological Theology or Theological Sinology, the words of Christ should be a leading principle within it, and this is my proposed comprehensive theology.”<sup>46</sup> Through a lot of social investigation and theory arrangement, finding the mutual adaptation between the two in the overlap of CCF in the early childhood education, I’m trying to interpret this vast issue by using the case study method.

Cross-border activities and cultural adaptation can coexist and may not be opposing, or, mutually exclusive (Levitt and Schiller, 2004; Levitt, 2004; Zhou, 1999). Christianity and Chinese Culture, as two dialogue entities, achieve unity in the expression of “Chinese Christian.” The ideal state of Christianity is based on Mutually Adapting Christianity and Chinese Culture and organic co-construction (Liu, 1995). It will not only enrich the Chinese culture in the spirit of belief

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University, He had been a pastor in the Hong Kong Church of Luke, director of a middle school, director of a Christian publishing house, lecturer in a Baptist seminary, and present of the Christian Cultural Association.

<sup>46</sup> Ho Sai Ming (1999). *Rongguan shenxue yu rujia sixiang*, Religion and Culture Publishing, P145, Beijing

and its values,<sup>47</sup> but also enrich the culture of the Christian system and ideological content. This theory is similar to Charles H. Kraft's (2001) dynamic-equivalence transculturation. The latter means reality is filtered through the worldview provided by one's culture, which assumed one should interpret Scripture in the light of one's own cultural conditioning. Also, Wang Xiaochao (2007)<sup>48</sup> proposed a theory named Interaction and Transformation of Culture<sup>49</sup> which is used to understand the communication between the East and West.

In this study, the relationship between World Christianity and Chinese Culture is virtually the relationship between Christianity,<sup>50</sup> traditional Confucianism<sup>51</sup> and globalization corresponding to contextualization of China. Regarding "Chinese Culture," I understand it as a dynamic objectification not a static one, because one of the

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<sup>47</sup> The Confucian thought Harmony is Chinese national spirit essence, which can be reflected in the following several aspects: Firstly, the "Forgiveness" which is based on kindness; secondly, the "Center" which based on virtue; thirdly, the "Straightness" which based on value judgment; finally, the "Growth" which based on harmonious growth of everything. "Harmony" reflects Confucian tolerance, tolerant mind and soul. "Center" reflects Confucian profound, quiet accomplishment and mind state. "Straightness" reflects Confucian calmness, honesty and affection. "Growth" reflects Confucian harmonious and vivid world outlook and the outlook of development. These four aspects are interlinked, because they have a common foundation that is the Confucian thought "Harmony." The Confucian Thought "Harmony" and Chinese National Spirit, Huang Yu (Philosophy Dept.of Nanchang University, Jiangxi, Nanchang 330047)

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.bjpopss.gov.cn/bjpopss/n24519c58.aspx>. Wang Xiaochao is a professor of Chinese Tsinghua University

<sup>49</sup> According to his assertion, cross-cultural transmission shall be seen in two-way rather than one-way output and input. Conflict and confrontation of culture of is necessary, however it doesn't prove that heterogeneous cultures cannot be integrated. Cultural integration is feasible, while the "cultural integration" which aims to eliminate all differences is impossible. Cultural adaptation and localization of foreign culture is an effective way for cultural integration.

<sup>50</sup> I here keep religion as a parallel factor with culture and use it as a single parameter.

<sup>51</sup> Confucianism was commonly counted by Western scholars as a religion, but the Chinese tend to view it more as an ethical system. In this paper, I view it as one Cultural element of Chinese Culture as well as Globalization and Communism.

characteristics of traditional Chinese culture is collectivism, while contemporary Chinese culture is less collective but more individualistic. This popular reaction is caused by various reasons, one could politically be the Cultural Revolution, and another could be the market economic reform (Wang, 1999). Therefore in this paper, Chinese culture is relative and dynamic, which should be understood contextually.

### **3.5 Dual Educational Theory of Perennialism and Constructivism**

In this section, the educational thought of CCF was examined from the perspective of the philosophy of education. Concepts of education decide the ways of parenting; the attributes and behaviors of the factors that influence the parenting of Chinese Christian families is, after all, determined by their educational philosophy. Durkheim (1915) maintained that “a religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden—beliefs and practices which unite in one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them.” They think their primary mission is to aid in the moral and spiritual formation of children. Likewise, the core aim of education for Chinese Christian parents is to help children to establish the Christian faith and to cultivate the character of Christ. According to Ou Yingyu (2005)’s research on Western Christian Educational philosophy, the dominating representatives of contemporary Christian education and their respective views are summarized as Christian educators take “God as the supreme and ultimate principle,” and the Bible as the eternal truth and absolute moral standards. In the Christian philosophy of education, Neo-Thomism<sup>52</sup> advocated for by

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<sup>52</sup> New Thomism is of a genre of modern Western thoughts of education advocating religious education. It used to be the scholastic philosophy of the Vatican between the end of the 19th century and the early 20th century.

Catholics and Personalism advocated for by Protestants are the most influential and representative Western education philosophies; they could be classified as new Traditionalism. In this article, I classified them as the category of Perennialism.<sup>53</sup> Perennialist philosophers, despite a variety of minute distinctions, generally feel that they are advocates of the True Philosophy and with it the True Philosophy of Education. Plato, indirectly, and Augustine, directly, set much of the pattern of Christian theology until the time of Thomas Aquinas. The starting point of Perennialism is classical realism; it proposed the eternal subjects as part of the core curriculum to improve and develop human beings. Perennialists assert that education, like the truth on which it rests, is universal and authentic at every period of history. Neither truth nor education is relative to time, place, or circumstances (Gultek, 2005). Unlike the secular Perennialists of Hutchins and Adler, Religious Perennialists believe in a world of Reason, Being, and God (metaphysics) and in truth as Reason and Intuition. Jacques Maritain, the representative of Religious Perennialists is usually considered the most prominent contemporary spokesman of the religious Perennialists. He asserted, ultimately, education ought to elevate each student to become a free human being imbued with knowledge and love to live in a state of internal freedom which encourages the best of humanity to open up...What a child studies, as well as his actions, attitudes, and developing beliefs, are all a sacred part of his vital relationship with God, which will have eternal effects and consequences both for him and those he influences throughout his life. (Maritain, 1939; Allard, 1982). From this very general philosophical position, the learner is viewed as a

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Distinguishing between the regular religious ethics which are irrationalist, the ethic of New Thomism emphasizes the consistence of faith and reason, religion and science.

<sup>53</sup> The education of New Thomism and Personalism are consistent with each other in promoting the absolute philosophy of the Bible, as well as the goal of training the character of Christ. Therefore, I put the two into Religious Perennialism.

rational and spiritual being, the teacher as a mental disciplinarian and spiritual leader, the curriculum as the subject matter of the intellect and spirit, the teaching method as training the intellect.<sup>54</sup> As a result, religion must occupy a central place in the curriculum, and the teachers are seen as a minister of learning to possess a body of knowledge that the learner lack but needs to gain.

Religious Perennialists specially pay attention to moral education. They attributed chaotic modern bourgeois life to people's ignorance of the soul as well as morality and religion. Therefore, they advocated "moral re-education" and "religious recovery." They attempted to restore medieval educational tradition, and they put religious education as the core of all education to train devout young Christians. Also, they argued that: "The main purpose of education, in the broadest sense is to 'form a man' . Or, more precisely, is to facilitate children to achieve perfection of moral and rational human life."<sup>55</sup> According to Maritain, man as animal endowed with reason, whose supreme dignity is in the intellect; and man as a free individual with a personal relation to God, whose supreme righteousness consists in voluntarily obeying the law of God; and man as a sinful and wounded creature called to divine life and freedom of grace, whose supreme perfection consists of love. (Maritain 1943b/2001). In this regard, religious Perennialist educators hope to change the fate of ego-filled mankind by religion through establishing the God-centered Humanism (which is called the True Humanism in their philosophy of moral education) rather than human-centered Humanism in highly developed society where people only believe in their own ability and opportunity pursuing wealth and lust instead of

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<sup>54</sup> Perennialism in Education (2011) Perennialism in Education.

<sup>55</sup> *Modern Western Works on Educational Thoughts of Bourgeois Schools* (Xiandai Xifang Zichanjieji Jiaoyusixiang Liupai Lunzhuxuan) (1980). Beijing: People's Education Press.

worshipping God and loving each other (Shi Shaobo & Zhang Wenqing, 2013).

In any case, Perennialism is good at guiding faith and moral education practice; therefore it was widely welcomed by the international community, especially the Christian community throughout history. Even now it is still influential to a certain degree. The overall socio-cultural environment that the contemporary CCF faces is very similar to what Perennialism first proposed. Thus it is a good reference for contemporary Chinese moral education. Likewise the theory also has its own flaws: many educators questioned the validity of the revelations or intuitions of immutable truth and the practice of relying on an intermediary of some sort to explain the supernatural. Aside from that, some educators argued that knowledge as an end in itself is not a sufficient rationale for education. Therefore, Perennialist philosophy is seen as regressive and rigid. It was criticized because of its hierarchical principle that insists theoretical and abstract subjects have a higher ranking and a greater educational priority over those that are practical and applied (Gutek, 2005). In this regard, Constructivist<sup>56</sup> Learning Theory which stresses situation and application, is precisely able to make up the theoretical deficiency. In fact, the traditional teacher-centered method of educational systems has been changed; the influence of constructivism is increasing in research on modern education theory that focus on creative thinking and problem solving (Tse-Kian, 2003; Herrington, 2005). Constructivists' views on learning are that knowledge is constructed rather than transmitted, therefore teaching is

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<sup>56</sup> Constructivism, in this study is based on the semantics of contextualized Constructivist Learning Theory, and using the standpoint of Dewey's experimental empiricism philosophy. The assertion of constructivism related to this study included the emphasis on the "experience" and "significance constructing" as well as the claims of "learning by doing" or "situational learning." Constructivist learning emphasizes the initiative of children, so it is child-centered. Quoted in Liu Hua Chu (2009). *The Comparison of Dewey and Constructivist Education*, Education Review (2).

not a process of imparting knowledge, but to facilitate learners from their own experiences to construct their own meaning. That is, knowledge could be seen from introductory knowledge to advanced knowledge. Thus, constructivist educators advocated child-centered learning: learners are not passive receivers of knowledge, but active constructors of knowledge. Teachers are not transmitters of knowledge, but organizers for the learning activity of students. (Gu M.Y. & Meng F. H., 2001) In the constructivist view, learners construct their own understandings, and knowledge cannot simply transfer from one person to another because it is not a pure copy of the external world (Baki & Bell 1997; Jonassen, Peck, & Wilson, 1999; Phillips, 2000). The student does not just passively take in knowledge, but actively constructs it on the basis of his/her prior knowledge and experiences (Piaget, 1972).

The growing influence of constructivism and increase of research studies on the subject have affected the teaching approaches of universities as well (Herrington, & Herrington, 2005). Constructivism provides an alternative epistemological aspect to the objectivist tradition, which suggested that the goal of instruction is help the learner to find “the” correct (Duffy & Jonassen, 1992, quoted in Kocadere & Ozgen, 2012). From Dewey’s experiential learning to Piaget’s cognitive constructivism and Vygotsky’s social constructivism, constructivist concepts of learning and teaching have spread to the world. In fact, Chinese curriculum reform in 2001 is also based on constructivism; the main theoretical change lies in students’ autonomy, that is from “teacher-centered” to “student-centered” (Jiang Shudong & Liu Hongwen, 2005).<sup>57</sup> This change has a resonance for critical thinking, process learning, interdisciplinary studies, and collaborative learning of post-modernist tendencies in the educational field. Postmodernists share

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<sup>57</sup> Jiang Shudong and Liu Hongwen (2005). Constructivist theories and the new concepts of curriculum. *Journal of Chongqing College of Education*(18), 2.



the contextualist assumption that, in science, there can be no final or complete analysis of anything (Rusenau, 1992). The contextualist emphasis on change or novelty is one of its most distinctive features (Prawat & Floden, 1994: 43); 80 *Hou* & 70 *Hou* Christian parents are inevitably affected by this trend of progressive education. As a generation grew up in post-modernist era, they themselves suffered from the drawbacks of the conservative traditional education system. That made them, without exception, call for a more humane educational philosophy as a guide. Not only Christian parents, but also non-Christian parents acted to seek solutions because of dissatisfaction with exam-oriented education and cramming education. From the home-schooling Waldorf model of education, to international schools, Sinology classrooms, and even sending their children to study abroad, various forms of education are tried. Whatever approach is preferred, Constructivist Learning Theory, which aims to overcome the drawbacks of traditional teaching and learning view, seems to have consistently high educational requirements for 80 *Hou* & 70 *Hou*-Christian parents, such as respecting the "autonomy of the child" and paying attention to the experience of "situated learning." This article tends to adopt a socio-constructivist approach, which as strong links to Deweyan philosophy. Contextualism, as one of three world views<sup>58</sup> discussed by Pepper (1942), is regarded as the theoretical rational for socio-constructivism (Prawat & Floden, 1994). According to the socio-constructivist viewpoint, knowledge, being in part a product of activity, is situated in context and culture (Järvelä & Niemivirta, 1999). The goal of learning it is to "know about the world as we experience it," a process of "making determinate the indeterminate experience," of rendering the chaos of experience meaningful and useful (Walter & Marks, 1981).

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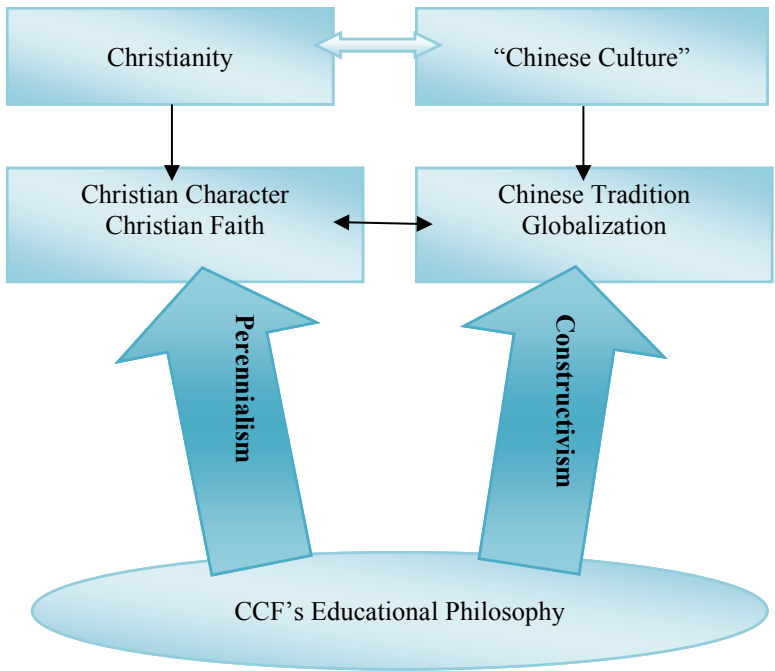
<sup>58</sup> Aside from contextualism, mechanism and organicism are seen as three world view (Pepper, 1942).

Accordingly, the curriculum emphasizes experience, activities, and problem solving (Guttek, 2005).

The above two theories simultaneously affect CCF; the former is on faith and moral education while the latter exists in the non-faith and moral education. In this way, CCF's Educational Philosophy could be illustrated as "Dual Educational Theory of Perennialism and Constructivism." The former represents their standpoint toward faith and morality which they constantly insist on. The latter represents their attitude to the domain of worldly studying. Specifically, "Chinese Culture," constituted with Confucian tradition and contemporary civilization (see Graphic 1), is acquired under Constructivism.

However, as the above analysis shows, the Perennialist and Constructivist education theory basically takes the opposite point of view: Perennialists rely on certainty to promote the exercise of intelligence, accordingly, the emphasis on content rather than method of instruction reflects the commitment to metaphysics as the highest kind of knowledge (Guttek, 2005). The latter believed that the world human beings live in is purposeful while the former denied the human purpose of reaching an ultimate end (Guttek, 2005). Unlike Perennialism which states "the presupposed truth" in Christian education, Constructivism, as the representative of secular education philosophy, assumes a temporary truth that might be proved incorrect by future examination and experimentation (Williams, 2007; Pazmino, 2003). Consequently, my question is if they really play roles on CCF at the same time. If so, how are their respective roles played? I verified and modified the theory through Chapter 3 & 4.

**Figure 1:** Dual Educational Theory of Perennialism and Constructivism



## **RESEARCH METHOD AND OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH**

### **4.1 Research Method**

In total, this study is mainly conducted based on the data through in-depth, open-ended interviews and participant-observation with five Christian mothers and their involved families as semi-structured or unstructured informal interviews were employed from time to time. Relevant educators of early parenting, such as teachers working at Sunday school teachers, local early learning centers, and Bible-based preschool are also interviewed face-to-face by formal structured interviews as well as participant-observation.

The primary goal of the study was to examine the educational philosophy of Chinese Christian mothers and to understand how it influenced their childrearing activities. To accomplish this goal, I utilized qualitative case study as the methodological framework. Merriam (1998) defined a qualitative case study as an “intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit.” In summary, case studies provide researchers with an understanding of complex social phenomena while preserving the holistic and meaningful characteristics of everyday events (Yin, 1994, quoted in Blacka, 2001). As several scholars point out, case studies are a valuable tool for understanding human behavior in depth (Stake, 1995;

Gillham, 2000) and much can be learnt from a particular case because a case study focused on a single unit, a single instance, and the issue of generalizability looms larger than with other types of qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). Ericson (1986) argues that since the general lies in the particular, what we learn in a particular case can be transferred to a similar situation. Stake (Stake 2000, retrieved from Merriam, 1998) explains how this knowledge transfer works: “Case researchers, like others, pass along to readers some of their personal meanings of events and relationship....They know that the reader too will add and subtract, invent and shape-reconstructing the knowledge in ways that leave it... more likely to be personally useful.” As mentioned earlier, CCF is a relatively modern phenomenon which is growing rapidly, and CCF’s parenting activities are highly depended on China’s holistic situation of education. The complex nature of CCF’s parenting requires multiple sources of evidence like interviews and written documents to provide a complete picture of the phenomenon within its context. In this respect, case studies are able to empirically investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1994, quoted in Blacka, 2001). Consequently, the case study approach which links the contemporary phenomenon of the emergence of CCF to China’s transitional context through multiple sources of evidence was suited for this study,

Secondly, case study allows for any number of qualitative strategies to be combined with the case. A multiple-case was presented as a few people’s stories were manifested (Merriam, 1998). In this study, following the statement of Stake (2000) that readers can learn vicariously from an encounter with the case through the researcher’s narrative description, I presented five Chinese Christian mother’s childrearing experiences as narrative case studies by purposeful

selection, conveying the general context of the lives of CCF. The use of narrative as complementary research method or approaching “knowledge as conversation,” helps connect with the heart of the Chinese Christian mothers’ experience.

And last, case studies fit the situations that cannot be controlled or manipulated, and was chosen for these merits (Yin, 1994, quoted in Blacka, 2001). It is generally strong precisely where statistical methods and formal models are weak. A merit of case methods is in testing hypotheses and they are also particularly useful for theory development (George & Bennett, 2004). In this study, the “Dual Educational Theory of Perennialism and Constructivist” and “Mutually Adapting Theory” that I presented in Chapter 2 needed to be verified and further developed. As a result, multiple-narrative case study was utilized as the research methodology.

## **4.2 Overview of Research**

Yin (1994) strongly emphasizes the importance of the planning phase of case study research. Throughout my fieldwork in a city of Northern China from early October 2012 to late October 2013, I conducted 37 face-to face, open-ended interviews and 7 phone interviews with diverse early-education-related people, mainly focusing on five white-collar Christian mothers<sup>59</sup>. Due to space limitations, the full stories of the participants will not be shared, but glimpses of their experiences will highlight themes and subordinate themes applying

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<sup>59</sup> I actually met Christian mothers far more than that number from time to time since I have shuttled back and forth among Sunday school, Bible study, Christian preschool and so on. However I chose five of them with whom and whose families I might investigate best about early parenting. At the beginning of the research I have discussed my topic with local clergy such as preachers and pastors so I also know their family education thinking in some degree, while this study is inclined to portray the family education of laymen.

thematic analysis. Verification of findings was done through constant comparative analysis between data sources and existing literature, while also confirming themes with the mothers (Riessman, 1993). I started the statement with the consideration of role and ethical issues; then, I described how I selected participants and profiled the main participants; after that, I elaborated how I collected data and conducted data analysis.

#### ***4.2.1 Researcher's Role***

A growing number of anthropologists believe that anthropology should be an adherence to the “scientific spirit” of the humanities; it is not trying to construct a fact but also makes efforts to understand a life (Huang, 2013; Chen & Lin, 2004; Pak, 2006). Considering that the method used in this research is narrative, I duly insert my own parenting experiences and feelings throughout the whole process, and thus I have a dual identity. I emphasize an “emic” point of view to approach the “facts” to find rituals and symbols from the perspective of participants instead of the researcher’s subjective value judgments. In this way, my Christian identity granted me a privileged understanding of people’s thoughts and lifestyle, and such a believer’s point of view is complimentary with a trained anthropological researcher. Objectively, it is beneficial for the understanding of these two aspects of both Christianity and anthropology (Huang, 2002a).

Therefore, I prefer to consider myself as a “learner” instead of a “teacher” since in my eyes the informants are my “teachers.” During the interview, I used the interviews’ own words to disclose their own opinions about issues and their own explanations about problems, thus displaying their behaviors, habits, and sense-making. They are not only the “subjects” who have consciousness, but also important informants for my research.

Because of my good understanding of early education in China as well as my identity as the mother of a little kid, I could be called a true

“insider” and have strong sympathy with those interviewees in every aspect. Since I am familiar with their dialects, there is almost no obstacle between us about culture, custom, or language when I communicate with them. Meanwhile, since I have the same religion, rapport is much easier to form between us. An interview lasting for 1.5 to 2 hours always passed before I knew it. However, I still know very well that I’m a researcher, so I often remind myself that I must handle all the information which I have seen, heard and felt as a bystander. During research, I often have to shift my identities and remind myself that I have an objective existence, since after all when doing anthropological studies, you must not only be able to “enter,” you still have to learn how to “get out” (Fei, 1997). In general, I led the progress of research in accompaniment with all participants.

#### ***4.2.2 Ethical Issues***

Overall, most participants trusted my identity, or rather the motivation and purpose of my research and other procedures were also to be actively supported. I selected two mothers I already knew personally and got recommendations from the Sunday school and Christian preschool where my son goes; all the mothers were willing to accept my interview request because they regarded it as reflection on their early parenting lives. Moreover, they introduced their husbands, parents, and parents-in-law to me as well mainly because that I shared the same religion with them. S.Y. Pak (2004) suggests that fieldwork is essentially a collaborative undertaking that involves extended dialogue between the informant and the fieldworker on the meaning of experience in a given cultural context. In my case, I also made a point of providing open explanation to research participants of my personal background as an anthropologist as well as a mother of 2-year-old boy. This provided



a point of reference to the participants, facilitating a more productive and collaborative experience.

However, some parents were reluctant to be questioned about their private issues such as their marriage life or financial situation. Some extended family members did not wish to be interviewed at the beginning, but once the mother or the father helped to explain the purpose of my researcher, especially when they found out that it is early education they agreed to be interviewed except that they had no idea about what they know in the area of my study. Two cases showed the participant's concern regarding security. One is of a Christian grandma who once asked me if it is legal to write any paper about religion under the communist government. Another is about a teacher of a Christian preschool, who seemed very cautious when responding to my questions worrying that the propaganda about the school may cause "security issues." No interviewees showed worry or regret after the interviews were conducted. Thus, in general, I had little ethical concerns in research and "was a person with whom they could 'feel comfortable' enough to trust" as Jackall (1988) described. Permitting me to enter their families, sometimes offices and shops, I recorded and transcribed recordings from parents, grandparents, and other interviewees. Of course, for the protection of the participants' privacy, all the names and places are used anonymously; all data were taken with protective measures in the research.

#### ***4.2.3 Selection of Participants***

In this study, I selected five Christian mothers and their involved families as my participants. They were born either in the 1970s or 1980s; their average education background is junior college and they have been Christians from 1 year to 20 years. The age of their children ranges from one-and-a-half to five. Besides the level of mothers' faith, I considered the level of their husbands' faith, and the degree of family's

support for Christianity, the children's gender as well as whether living with the old generation or not as factors influencing the implementation of Christian family education. Christian mothers are the main participants while fathers, grandparents, and other members are auxiliary participants. As mentioned earlier, I named it a Christian family as long as the mother is a Christian and in charge of primary parenting work whether other members (including husband) are believers or not, so family members here includes the extended family. Specific conditions of selection are as follows:

As shown in the following figure, five mothers are arranged according to the age of their children. Mothers whose children are under three years old and in the phase of complete family parenting showed up before the mothers whose children are in the phase of kindergarten. Of note, Alice have two sons that one is below 3 and the other one is 18 months. The most authentic and vivid materials were collected by deep interview, as well as the on-site participant observation of parenting activities. Mothers whose children are in the phase of kindergarten helped draw a complete picture of all the phases of childrearing for children between the ages of 0-3 by family narrative. Interviews are looked for, on one hand, by the help of Sunday school teachers' recommendation (e.g. M1, M2) and the help of the Christian kindergarten on the other hand (e.g. M3, M4, M5). These are the most effective ways to find a Christian mother. The feature of this research is to make the researcher cooperate with participants requiring their language skills, reflection ability, and constructing capacity to a certain degree. In general, the Christian mother selected belonged to urban white-collar class (M4 is a returnee from Canada), and their average education is an undergraduate degree. The reason why the level of education was considered as an indicator is to collect information on a Christian family in a more idealized condition. According to the

research done by Liu G.Y. (2008), a mother's level of education plays a decisive important role in the healthy development of her children's socialization. Compared with poorly-educated mothers, well-educated mothers have fewer characteristics like blindly loving, despotism, punishment, and ignorance. They prefer to apply reasonable measures. Also their working hours were flexible, some even freelance, so that they were able to make time to "talk" with me.

The generation selected is from 1972-1983, standing for the main strength of early parenting in contemporary China. As far as possible to make the samples more representative, I selected the mothers living in one city but from different hometowns, different fields of work and different phases of faith (some have been Christians for a long and some are new Christians). In addition, all the mothers selected, more or less, are in contact with the extended family on parenting issues, so that multiple level and multi-voiced "stories" of culture are heard.

**Table 3: General Profiles of the Chinese Christian Mothers**

Code	Generation after	Profession	Time to have been baptized	Husband's Status	Time to have been a mother	Child status <sup>60</sup>	If live with grand-parents
Hannah (M1)	80s	Sunday School leader	Since Child-Old	Generation after 70s, administrator of a property management corp. 6-year-believer	13 Years	Girl, 14 months	Parents-in-law, unbeliever
Ruth (M2)	80s	Administration of an early education institution	1.5 Years	After 80s, executive of a corporation, unbeliever	2 Years	Boy, 27 months	Mother-in-law, believer /parents

<sup>60</sup> Children's age refers to the age at the time of interview.

				r			idolater
Alice (M3)	80s	Restaurant operator	7 Years	After 80s, overseas Chinese, restaurant operator 5-year-believer	3 Years	Boyl, 5 years, Taking Homesch ing Boy 2, 18 months,	No
Esther (M4)	70s	Tailor's shop operator & art teacher at a Christian school(volunteer)	8 Years	After 70s, university teacher, unbeliever,	1.5 Years	Boy, 5 years studying at a Christian preschool	No <sup>61</sup>
Grace (M5)	80s	Public middle school teacher	8 Years	After 70s 13-year-believer Entrepreneur	1 Year	Girl, 5 years studying at a Christian preschool	No

I also divided the participating families into three categories according to the scale of religious family members, and the results are as follows:

- a. The wife is Christian and the husband is non-Christian. Esther's and Ruth's family belong to this case. Esther's husband is a Communist, her parents-in-law are communists too, and they used to be very close integrated with each other in the baby's first year even though her family doesn't live with the old generation. In Ruth's family, her husband is atheist even though his mother has a tendency toward Christianity.
- b. Both of the wife and husband are Christians, and there are not Christian family members who are not involved in the childrearing work directly, such as Alice's family belongs to this

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<sup>61</sup> Wife of M4's brother had lived with the family moved from the south and helped the shop run since the boy was about 2 years old.

case. Her parents lives separately and her mother-in-law lives in Canada though she is a Christian.

- c. Both the wife and husband are Christians, and there are other Christian family members who are involved in the childrearing work directly; Hannah's family belongs to this case. Her mother is a devoted Christian and she visits twice a week to help look after the child while Hannah lives with the Atheist parents-in-law. Grace's family had lived with her Christian mother before the child was three.

#### ***4.2.4 Data Collection***

I adopted an open-ended interviewing strategy so as to give my informants ample opportunities to bring up matters that they considered important, rather than merely respond to my questions. To avoid generalizations based on simple statements, I always asked for specific examples to illustrate the point an individual was trying to make (Pak, 2004). Open-ended questions encouraged discussion provided a frame of reference, and established depth without steering responses (Connolly, 1999). This study basically uses the method of interview with the Christian families, whereas, I focused on interviews with mothers, that is, interviews with fathers and other family members are subordinate. Most interviews were conducted at home, and sometimes at the workplace of the interviews or cafe so as to achieve natural state of relaxation. In addition to recording full interviews and organizing information into text, participants' family child-care diaries, photographs, blogs, and other written materials were also collected, in addition to my live observation records. I made a conscious effort to collect the data related to the childrearing work as "thick" as possible in a three-dimensional way to cross-examine multiple perspectives.

When it comes to interviews, I mainly used semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured nature of the interview plan provided

guidance for the study through predefined questions, but also afforded flexibility to explore divergent evidence or other related issues. All the questions were completed in advance. Interview materials I prepared were composed of common parts and personalized parts, which means among the questions some were for all the families, and some were for individual families (see the appendix for details). What is more, there are also improvised questions at the interview site. Every time the interview ranged from 1.5 hours to 2.5 hours. All interviews were sound-recorded with the consent of the interviewees. In addition to the sound-recordings, I also made field notes which included the scene, descriptions (such as the interviewee's emotions, gestures, tones, etc.) and issues arising from the mind at that time.

Besides mothers, interviews with fathers and grandparents were also conducted. As for field observation, for parents whose children were under the age of three, I adopted actual childrearing observations, namely, field observing parents' childrearing, such as their corresponding education behavior and children's reaction in cases like having a meal, going to bed, and play time. I also focused on observing the room arrangement, and what books parents bought for their children. For parents whose children are over the age of three, emphasis was on the interview instead of field observation. Meanwhile, I also collected parenting diary and parenting blogs to effectively complement life experience for the parenting of 0-3-year-old children, in order to make up for the memory lapses. Merriam (2002: 25) warned that "what someone tells you in an interview [should] be checked against what you observe in a field visit or what you read or see in documents or artifacts relevant to the investigation."<sup>62</sup> Considering of this, the Christian families' activities at churches, Christian preschools, and local early learning centers were recorded by me in order to achieve a more

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<sup>62</sup> Retrieved from Park (2011).

comprehensive view. As a result, pastors and teachers at the Sunday school, staff, and parents of Christian preschool and the local early learning center were involved and contacted as well. In the final phase of the study, I constantly reflected on my various research records in order to compare my original subjective ideas, to achieve my ultimate research purposes, to modify the research issues and to construct mothers' parenting stories.

According to children's ages, I divided the interviewed families into two groups: Group A and Group B. Children in Group A are all under 3 while children in Group B are all between the ages of 3 and 5. Since Alice has two children, one is 1.5 years old and the other is 5 years old, there are actually 6 children involved in my interview.

This research, where this method is applied can be divided into three phases. (1) From the beginning of October 2012 to the beginning of February 2013, three interviews of mothers in Group B were made. The interviews contained not only the experiences of raising children but also some life stories of mothers. I have also collected some diaries and blogs about raising children as well as some photos and videos, in order to restore those mothers' experiences in a vivid way and thus understand the study cases in scenarios. This is the telling part of mothers' stories of raising children. I turned the content of interview into words successively to form the original study text and shared the words with mothers in a timely fashion. From them, I have obtained some suggestions for the research. This is the retelling part of mothers' stories of raising children. Moreover, I also interviewed daddies and some relevant persons in Group B from the beginning of April to June to make the interviews authentic and objective. (2) From the middle of April 2013 to August 2013, in order to perform some on-site research, through the recommendation of Sunday schools of local churches, Christian kindergartens and some friends, Group A was added into this research. Children in Group A are all under 3 years old. After talking with the

mothers, I visited their home and thus obtained some first-hand materials. During this phase, transcription, writing text and sharing with mothers were done alternately until the materials are prepared enough. It is worth mentioning that once the original study text was formed in the first phase, I constantly examined the materials by confirming my understanding with my informant so that if I had misunderstood any portion of the conversation, they could correct me including revising the partial research issues as well as research theories. (3) From August 2013 to October 2013, after a focus interview, I began to concentrate on reviewing records made during the research. During the process of writing this thesis, I kept in touch with participants all the time, and any necessary follow-up correspondence was done by telephone or MSN so as to pursue further the topics that had been previously discussed.

#### ***4.2.5 Data Analysis***

In case study research, data analysis consists of making a detailed description of the case and its context. In analyzing my data of five Chinese Christian mothers, I followed the four procedures advocated by Stake (Stake, 1995, quoted in Hébert & Beardsley, 2001). According to Stake, researchers should start with “categorical aggregation” which means to search for a collection of instances from the data, looking for issue-relevant meanings to emerge. Then it followed with “directed interpretation”, which means to examine single instances in the data and draw meaning from them without looking for multiple instances. Afterwards, the researcher goes to “establish patterns” and looks for any correspondence between two or more patterns or categories. At last, the researcher is supposed to present his or her findings descriptively to facilitate the reader’s forming “naturalistic generalizations,” which are conclusions readers develop through vicarious experiences so well-constructed that they feel as if the experience was their own. In case



study research, data analysis consists of making a detailed description of the case and its context. Therefore, in my data analysis process, the themes that emerged began with the analysis of my initial observations, were constantly refined throughout the data collection and analysis process, and continuously shaped the formation of categories (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, quoted in Hébert & Beardsley, 2001).

Specifically, I conducted the process of organizing and reviewing followed by *hearing* (Borland, 1991; Kleinman and Copp, 1993; Olson and Shopes, 1991), *transcribing*, *coding*, *mapping*, *comparing*, *interpreting*, and *analyzing*. They are not rules, and, following the basic precepts, will need to be applied flexibly to fit the research questions and data (Patton, 1990). I drew the map and further obtained subject accomplishment analysis by seeking the “Indigenization Concept” under this framework. Because most of the interviews are conducted in Chinese, the transcripts quoted in this study are first presented in Chinese and then the English translation follows.

**Table 4:** Phases of Thematic Analysis

	Phase Description of the process
Hearing	Listening to the stories narrated and experiencing the emotions of participants and interviewers and taking notes about the time, place and emotions.
Transcribing	Familiarizing yourself with your data: Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
Coding	Generating initial codes: Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
Mapping	Searching for themes: Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic “map” of the analysis.
Analyzing & Interpreting	Comparing the “good” themes Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and to interpret.

Original table is by Virginia Braun & Victoria Clarke (2006) as follows:

	Phase Description of the process
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, <u>noting down initial ideas.</u>
2. Generating initial codes:	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.
4. Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
5. Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Transcribed interview texts were divided into “units” of meaning; a technique based upon the constant comparative method was used (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, cited by Blacka, 2001). These units were grouped thematically to become categories through reading and rereading the intermediate texts. The categories were given titles designed to represent their common theme. Through a process of constant comparison between the emerging themes, the categories are refined to the extent that the main themes represented within the data can be identified (Blacka, 2001). With specific themes to guide me, I also dissected my field notes, interview transcripts, blogs, and diaries for further confirmation of the themes. I dialogued with participants about their stories to gain detailed, thick description and to verify the accuracy

of my understanding (member checking) (Dahlvig, 2013). The themes are identified within the explicit or surface meanings of the data, and the analyst is not looking for anything *beyond* what a participant has said or what has been written. Ideally, the analytic process involves a progression from description, where the data have simply been organized to show patterns in semantic content, and summarized, to interpretation, where there is an attempt to theorize the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications (Patton, 1990).

## RESULTS OF RESEARCH

In this chapter, the research process of how the questions were analyzed and solved will be illustrated. In 4.1, mothers' experiences in different phases of their lives before they became mothers are chosen, and then respectively, five mothers' upbringing experience and related educational background are discussed. In 4.2, I sorted out themes that represented the mothers' educational philosophy, and then described and interpreted them respectively.

### **5.1 Mothers' Upbringing and Educational Background**

Chinese women of the 80 *Hou* & 70 *Hou*-generations have witnessed their parents put into the vortex of the market economy after the reform of state-owned enterprises, and the dramatic social change in a short period of time. At school, the focus of learning in order to realize of Communism has gradually weakened. Instead, learn for realizing self value by holding a scientific vision. Since the mid-90s, the pursuit of higher education has emerged. To be a white-collar worker is the pursuit of many women even now. All these made the exam-oriented education not giving up its stage. On the other hand, influenced by one-child policy, Chinese women recognized the equal opportunities between men and women so well that the atmosphere of a henpecked which

emphasizes on feminism became a fashion. As the doors opened, their curiosity about foreign culture has also had the opportunity to be fulfilled. Hence, Christianity, once mysterious and distant, also quietly got popular; recommendations from relatives and friends or making contacting with a foreign culture led to the first generation of Christian women. My interview questions mainly focused on the mothers' education and religious background. For example, "*Could you share some impressive stories of your school-days that greatly affected your educational mind?*" "*How do you think of your parents' parenting on you?*" "*How did you become a Christian?*" "*What is your expectation on your child?*"

### ***5.1.1 Esther: My Childhood Memories***

She was born in Sichuan in the early 70s and she majored in oil painting in a well-known university. She operated two professional boutiques in Lijiang, where she became a Christian. Prior to this, she was a devout Buddhist. Later on, she moved to the north of China and followed her husband, a college teacher. Now, she is running a dress shop. With the help of her elder family members, she has taken care of her son until he was three. Now, her son studies in a Bible-based kindergarten. Her husband is a university teacher, a non-Christian.

I started to cook when I was as tall as the top of a kitchen range. Nobody cooked because my parents quarreled too much. My mother was not impressed with me because she used to be absent from home. When I noticed some neighbors laughed at our messy room, I would clean up the house because I do not want our family to be laughed at by people; I want our home to look like a home. So my self-living skill and self-caring ability is very strong. Although our family conditions are poor, my dad was studious. At that time, he studied English and provided varieties of magazine comics. This kind of enlightenment is

very important to me: some of which includes a Zhou Enlai handshake photo and the animal world. I can make my living all by myself; I opened two stores and managed the staff. This does not mean to say I am so strong. Growing up, my parents' relationship was not harmonious, thus, I learned to be independent. When I graduated from the university, I can do nothing except painting. First, I went to Beijing then moved to Lijiang. I also remember one of the reasons I moved to Lijiang. When the reform of state-owned enterprises took place, all the factories and mines like my father's collapsed instantly. All of a sudden, my parents are unemployed. Despite the fact that they served 40 years in that factory, they are fired suddenly. Then I realized that if I wouldn't stand up against the circumstances, our household would not survive. So, I chose to open a shop in Lijiang. My parents and sibling's survival relied on my shop's income. In this process, my character is like that of a man; doing things in haste with a strong-willed passion. When I face my kid, I think of it as my own business; I do not need the help of others. My husband grew up with his mom who did everything for him. In turn, my husband refused to do any of the housework. With my mother-in-law's influence over my kid, I am especially concerned that my son would be like his father. With regards to this, I do not want them to interfere with my family. Earlier, this was a concern because my husband and I had opposing views.

Because my parents' marriage itself is not good, I spent so many years learning something including psychology and "looking for religion like a medicine" to make myself bright and establish a good state in life. Although I was officially baptized as a Christian in 2006, I did not start off living like one. I did things according to the "human" method. Actually, the effects of Buddhism and Confucianism on me had been great for many years. It was easy to pick up because I was so familiar with it although my personality never follows prescribed order and

sticks it in the mud. Buddhist and Christian friends all have an influence on my emotional thought. I have been to Potala Palace; I used to go to the temple and the monks there. I worshiped all the way up to the palace even in the most stupid way. I have done all I can to achieve a purpose; I want happiness. Ten years of faith in Buddhism now appears to be a failure. In Buddhism, you always think ‘Today I did something not good. I want to be better. What can I rely on?’ I used to rely on my own moral upbringing, or tolerance, by putting all my problems all to myself rather than pouring it out. Now, I can rely on God. I cannot hold on to anything including raising my child except God. Because when I got married I was not young, I told myself that if I do not get pregnant before 35 years old, I would simply give up. Then just at the age of 35, I got pregnant, it was definitely NOT a coincidence. Since then, most of my time and energy was spent at home. For a long time, I had experienced the conversion of bitter sweet.

#### ***4.1.2 Alice: Adventures with My Chinese-Canadian Husband***

Alice is an 80 Hou overseas returnee. During her studies in Canada, she became a Christian and met her fiancé, who was born in southern China. Later, he immigrated to Canada with his mother. Now the couple is running a Chinese restaurant. They are raising their two sons by themselves. Her husband became a Christian after they got married. Recently, both her and her husband’s parents got converted to Christianity.

I am totally different from my older sister. I am immature in my parents’ eyes and also in my own eyes. When I was a teenager, I used to hang out with friends all day. In my early 20s, my dad sent me to Vancouver to study. I felt so excited because I could have more fun in a wider place. However, I was caught up in danger at the beginning of my stay there. The mistake arose out of living in a place with a high crime

rate and many residents taking drugs. Later, some brothers and sisters from a church helped me to move to a much safer place and I gradually learned something about Christianity. I got to know my husband who immigrated to Canada when he was young. Later on, I followed him to go back to Chengdu, his hometown to continue his studies. However, I thought neither of us is fit for staying on campus, so I persuaded him to suspend his schooling and opened an internet café. At that time, he was not a Christian and I had already become one. Unfortunately, my life had nothing to do with faith. I thought that it was quite easy for us to earn money, and I would certainly become very wealthy. Many of my former friends ran bars or KTV. For two or three times a week, we gathered together to have a drink. Eventually, our internet cafe closed down because of an accident.

After then, we left Chengdu and came back to my hometown. We bought an apartment, but our life was still unstable. I realized many of my friends have had achievements, but I achieved nothing. Some of my friends might have depended on their parents; others might have strived by themselves. Anyhow, most of them had stable jobs but I did not have. My mother-in-law sent us some money from Canada and we used the money to maintain our family. Actually we did not want to depend on anyone but it was too difficult for us to be independent. All these things made me live in mediocrity. I immediately submitted to fate and thought nothing would change in our future. We both were in bad mood at that time because the business was bitterly failing. Our marriage sunk as well. Reluctantly, we had lots of leisure time; we played with our children at home every day. Later on, we opened a noodle house. Gradually, I returned to church and wished God to give me strength. Our pastor often went to our home to pray for us. After experiencing so many misfortunes, my husband also started his religious life. During that period, I took my son to participate in the 5: 00 am morning prayer at



church. Perhaps he was only three years old at that time. Every Sunday, we closed my noodle house and took my two children to church.

My mother and my older sister have taught me since I was a little kid that a woman should wield power to control the men in the family. On the contrary, I now found that happiness in my marriage comes when I decided to be controlled by my husband. Indeed, I am on my way to be mature—both as a wife and a mother. My husband said so, too. Surely all of the changes came through my faith. If believing in Christ was a help to me before, now it is a way of life for me as well as my family.

### ***5.1.3 Grace: A Farewell to My Career and to an Exam-Oriented System***

Grace is a native local and she was born in the period post-80s. She majored in English when she was studying in the university. She became a middle school teacher after graduation. Her husband is a successful businessman. Her 4-year-old daughter is the only child of the family and has studied in a Christian kindergarten for about a year. During the first three years of her daughter's life, Grace lived with her own mother in order to take care of her daughter better. Her family members are all Christians.

As soon as the Maternity leave was over, I started to struggle with the pressure of prioritizing home and my job; I had to go back to work at my school. There were not, actually, many classes to teach, however extra work waited, such as arranging exams, correcting homework, and after-school classes. It was absolutely not necessary for me to do them all but when I saw everyone doing so, I had to follow them. I was so stressed and even felt exhausted when I arrived at home and faced my child. Moreover, I really did not like this teaching way of forcing students merely to recite the texts. That is why I will definitely not send my daughter to the public schools when she is older. I felt so wretched

that I finally made a bold decision: quit the job. I delivered my resignation to the schoolmaster. Unexpectedly, the principal approved me to stay at home for one more year. Everyone thought I was a lucky dog but I know it was a miracle from God. When returning back to school, I applied to work at the school's library instead of teaching students. I bid farewell to that desperate life. I did not tell anyone what I had done since they must think I was crazy if they found out that I quit my job, a cradle-to-grave security one. My mother was strongly disappointed in me when she realized; in her eyes, a successful woman should work hard and have some "position" in her career life. She has paid much attention to my academic performance since I was a little girl.

I wish my child could be raised up in a place where her spiritual growth and character development could be focused on. As a Christian, my priority turned to my family after having a baby. I think a mother should raise her children herself since this is an obligation from God. Leaving my kid aside makes me feel sinful. I envy those stay-at-home mothers very much since they can always accompany their children. Both my husband and I want to have one more child; it is also in line with the Bible. Unfortunately my workplace limited our choice.<sup>63</sup> This year, we finally made a decision to have my second child since I think nothing is more important than children.

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<sup>63</sup>According to China's one child policy, each couple is allowed to have only one child in principle. Any public employee working in governmental or public organizations will be expelled if they have over one child.

**5.1.4 Ruth: The Old Idea of Buying the Best for My Future Child**

In my view, Ruth always says that “I want to be a good wife just like Ruth in the Bible.” Around half a year after she gave birth to her first boy, she began to know about Christianity through Christian websites. Later, she got converted after attending a Christian meeting. She worked in an early education institution for a year and later she moved to another city to follow her husband who rejected her new beliefs. She has raised her child with some elder family members until the child was 2.5 years old.

Even when I was a little girl, I believed that there existed a certain spirit. My family offered sacrifices to Buddha and believed in fortune-telling. I wanted to pursue something and even once worshipped the crooked-neck female Buddha. But I never really took it as faith until I heard of Jesus. Christianity affected me in many ways, especially how I thought about childrearing, because when I first heard of Gospel, I had just given birth and suffered postpartum depression. I had no religion at that time so I used to complain on the internet. Later, I got know a mother who is a Christian and shared some awesome sayings from time to time that comforted me a lot. Later on, I started to read the Bible myself. *Daily Spiritual Bread* becomes a must read for me every day. I also pray before every meal and before going to bed every day. Besides that, I attend the worship and fellowships as much as possible. The more important thing is, gradually, I realized that raising a child is a more serious deal than I first thought. With respect to education, I started to read medical literature about new born babies, the latest news about child rearing and books about early education. For one year, I even worked in an early educational institution since I can learn more knowledge and skills for raising and educating children. In addition, I could introduce Christianity in my workplace. All these made me know

how many difficulties I will face; so I made up my mind to trust in God. I believe the best parenting principle could be found in the Bible.

My greatest desire is that my son can follow God throughout his lifetime and never leave the Heavenly Father's Word. Before I got converted to Christianity, I merely hoped he would become a successful man under the secular standard, so my duty is to support him to win at any cost. What I provided for him are mainly material things: money and networks. Now, I put my child in the hands of God. But my husband still wants to save much money for our son, and even for our grandson. Now I feel it is a pity. As for myself, I wish I could learn to be a good mother and then have some positive impact on my family.<sup>64</sup> Ruth as mentioned in the Bible, in my example.

#### ***4.1.5 Hannah: 12 Years of Childlessness in My Marriage***

Hannah graduated from a technical secondary school, and now is in charge of the Sunday school of a local church. She gave birth to a child in the 13th year of her marriage and raised her child with her other five family members. Her husband has a university degree, and he became a Christian after they married.

I went to church with my mother as a child since my mother and my grandparents are all Christians. I belong to the third generation of a Christian family. Therefore, I think it is quite natural to believe that there is a God. Of course my experience is quite special. I got along very well with my dad, who was good, righteous, honest, and his communication and organizational skills benefitted me a lot. I think my organizational abilities must come from my dad. Whereas, the atheism

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<sup>64</sup> "Heritage" is a Christian word, originated from the Psalms 127:3 of Bible: Sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from Him.

teachings at school made me gradually keep a distance from church for quite a long time.

I got married at early age but had a baby rather late. Two authoritative doctors both told me that my fallopian tube was obstructed because I had tuberculosis when I was a child. I was told the only method was to have a test-tube baby; still the prerequisite was that I had no tubercle bacillus. I felt like I was sentenced to death at that time. I had saved over 100 000 RMB Yuan since I got married, most of the money spent on the healing. I felt very distressed and cried every day. My mental state was very bad. Even though my husband still loved me very much, I felt that something had changed between me and my other family members. They treated me more and more coldly. I thought of all kinds of methods to commit suicide during moments of hopelessness. One day, I passed a church I used to go to and saw the cross suddenly. I decided to return to the church and see if God could save me or not. I had left church for several years by then. Later on, I joined the serving at Sunday school of the church. I told my husband that if he has faith, God will certainly give us a child according to his schedule; if not, it will still have been out of His good will. So my husband came to church with me. Two years later, in 2010, he was baptized. In 2011, the Sabbatical year I served in the church, I finally got pregnant; my faith made me a mother. I did not feel extremely excited because during the process of serving God, I was sure that God had already provided everything I needed; I will not feel regret even if I could not have a child at all. The three of us went to church together every Sunday since my child was 1.5 years old. I wish that she will walk with God, experience God's grace earlier and live a faithful life.

## **5.2 Cultivating Christian Children Within “Chinese Culture:” Mothers’ Childrearing Philosophy and Practice**

For the outsider, there is little difference at first glance in the early parenting patterns between Christian families and regular non-Christian ones in the way how they are fed, what they wore, as well as the books and toys that were bought. However, the conspicuous marker of difference was the family atmosphere. Christian mothers sought to be a Godly mother and raise a reverent child. More specifically, this is a commitment to an attitude to life, applying to all aspects of the Christian life for they attempt to become a good “steward.” In their mind, raising a child is more than a job or work, but a mission and calling in order to help children to build a relationship with God. In this regard, the most prominent characteristic of the Christian family education is the concept of “stewardship.” According to my investigation, Chinese Christian parents shared the above views. Furthermore, their parenting activity also included the transmission of “Chinese Culture” because they also highly value their Chinese identity. As mentioned earlier, the educational philosophy of a Christian mother could be divided into three dimensions: Confucian tradition, globalization (the first two constitute the “Chinese culture”) and Christian value. When the “Chinese Culture” is incorporated, it is filtered through a Christian lens. At the epistemological level, it is not difficult to recognize the differences between secular and Christian conceptual categories and assumption used to organize reality into coherent and meaningful pattern. To recall Christian ideals and at the same time become a well-adjusted secular citizen requires a compartmentalized mindset (S. Y. Pak, 2004).<sup>65</sup> The

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<sup>65</sup> In the paper by S. Y. Pak (2004), the contrary object to the secular culture is Muslim but not Christian culture.

Christian ethical dimension is discussed in 2.1, and in 2.2 the Chinese Cultural dimension is addressed.

### ***5.2.1 Living out Christian Faith and Christian Characters***

#### *5.2.1.1 Perennialism-Oriented Constructivistic Parenting: Family-Centered Multifaceted Training*

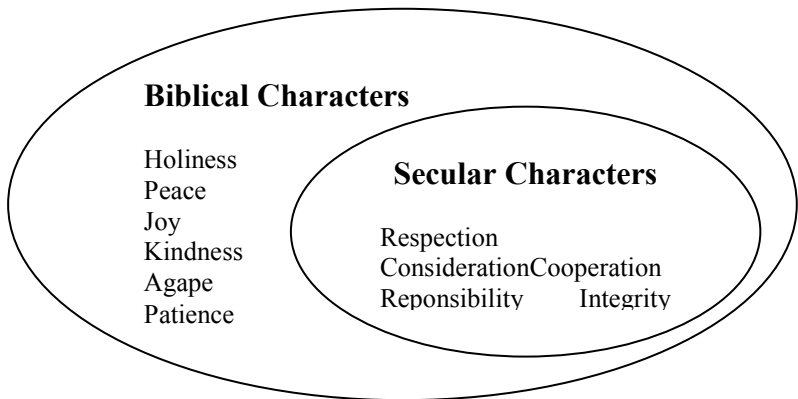
According to the Bible, the goal of the Scripture is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith,<sup>66</sup> therefore, love is the best manifestation of Christ's character. In this regard, a person who has Christian faith is supposed to have Christian character; Christian character is decisive. In Christian views, to pursue virtues is to be transformed like Christ. That is they come to experience Christ's character of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, and forgiveness (Calvin's New Testament Commentaries). Wallwork (1980, quoted in S. W. Kim, 2012) believes character development cannot be separated from morality and religion. When character is regarded as the sum of all our experiences, habits, and commitments, it is natural to think of religion as bedrock of character (Willimon, 1997, quoted in S. W. Kim, 2012). (Wilhelm & Firmin, 2008) also maintains that character education is a concept that touches all levels of Christian education. Noteworthy, the category of character advocated by the Bible is greater than the secular character. The former concerns not only with the self and others, but also directs the human being to God. In contrast to secular theories of human development, Christianity seeks to explain human development and human character differences by reference to God (Arthur, 2003).

The distinctions between Christian and secular views about character education lead to different teaching principles: for secular theorists, providing the right environment for children to flourish, and for Christians, revealing God's teaching regarding goodness throughout the

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<sup>66</sup> 1Thimoty1:5.

life of Jesus and the Bible and practicing it is recommended (Arthur, 2003; Pak, Seo & Han, 2009). As Christian parents, they put the Bible-based education as the best one, and the Bible is the best teaching material. Also, the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit are often referred to as the model of Christian characters. The Christian faith and Christian character is regarded as a constant and absolute standard; it does not change with the change of environment of time or space. At this point, their teaching philosophy is consistent with Religious Perennialism.



**Figure 2:** Relationship between Biblical Characters and Secular Characters<sup>67</sup>

At last, the intention why behind using the world “training” instead of “parenting” was given. “Training” was quoted from the Bible: “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not turn from it” (proverbs 22:6). The word of “train” is sometimes translated as “discipline”, but the meaning is still “Training.” The Bible attaches great

<sup>67</sup> H. Y. Jeung, J. K. Lee & M. C. Han (2013). Christian virtues extraction for children’s character education children (기독교 유아 인성교육을 위한 덕목 추출). *Journal of Christian Education in Korea* (36), 210.



importance to the training of children as do in Christian reading materials such as *Hints on Child Training, Wisdom of Training, To Train Up a Child, and Raising Kids God's Way*. According to Habermas and Issler (1992), Christian character is accomplished by the replacement of self-centeredness with God-centeredness. Therefore, character, along with communion, community, and commission are elements of reconciliation-the ultimate purpose of Christian education. One of the ultimate goals of education is to train to have good character. In fact, parental interest and preference of Christian faith and character appeared to be the life guide for their children in accordance with their religious beliefs and to create a new generation of devout Christians. Their understanding of Christian faith and character training could be illustrated as follows according to my interviews.

As for the teachings in Bible, my viewpoint is that truth is always truth. Minister Billy Graham's daughter once gave a speech after the September 11th Attack. She said, "Just look back to what we have done in the past decades! Someone has proposed that the teachings in Bible have gone out of fashion and should not be learned any more, and others all have agreed with this proposal. As a result, behind their parents' backs, teenagers steal and rob. Moreover, induced abortion and homosexuality happen frequently. Now you ask God why He let this attack happen, God may answer, "Children, it is you who don't allow me to enter your life." It is the same as how we educate our children. You didn't put the virtues of Bible into the child's heart in the beginning. When something wrong happens, you ask why the child has become like this. The reason is that you have not put the right standards into his heart and he has finally gone astray. In my opinion, the teachings for children in the Bible will never be out of date. What is right should always be right, regardless of time and place. Only when you put the truth into his heart in the beginning, you will be at ease no

matter where he will go in the future, since at last, she has to face this world alone. (Grace)

I believe that the best method of education is in the Bible. The teachings and guidance in the Bible are just like light that can make my child always walk on the righteous way. I want to read more Christian books about child rearing. Now I let my son listen to the Bedtime Bible Stories for Children every night since I hope he could be influenced by these stories. (Ruth)

God is the best teacher; therefore, a child who is educated according to the biblical principles is certainly the best child. In my opinion, teaching children how to love should be the most important. I will tell my son that we are the people who store up treasures in heaven. (Alice)

The Tao says, "In the beginning, human beings are kind creatures." However, the Bible says that everyone is a sinner. Christianity makes me understand that lofty virtues are formed by relying on religion. I thank God for giving my son an opportunity to become a believer while he is still young. I think this is the best investment in education. (Esther)

When I read books about child rearing, I often think about religion. Only when depending on religion, knowledge can truly play a role, because knowledge may change, but religion lasts forever. In my Sunday school, some parents have read a lot of books and acquired much knowledge about child rearing, but they often lose their temper and fail to control their emotion when educating children. I don't think this can be changed by people's own power. Some people know much about psychology, but they can't educate their own children well. I think educating children is too difficult for human beings, and only Jesus is able to do it well. Only Jesus loves children truly. (Hannah)

All the mothers insisted on the importance of the Christian faith associated with building a sound moral character, and they showed the willingness to train the children to develop a biblical worldview. Grace, Ruth, and Alice expressed their wishes regarding training the children's character. Esther turned from the view of Confucian human goodness to the Christian view of the original sin of man. This is a Christianized view of children from a Christian mother who lived under the background of Chinese culture as well as a strong motivator that facilitates children's character education. For the non-Christian parents, though, they tend to the influence of the view of human goodness. Hence, they see a child as a sheet of blank paper. Although the parenting manifested the Perennialism, in relation to the specific way of parenting, however, that is not entirely based on teacher-centered Perennialism but embodied in the "life situation" and the children's "experiences." Ou Yingyu et al. (2005) pointed out, "Compared with general educational philosophy, the goal of which is to explore and think introspectively the interactive relationship between educational theories and practices, Christian educational philosophy has its own uniqueness for not only God's word, which are the standards and refuge for their educational theories, but also concerning the practice of educational essences. There is the ideology of help and completion from the Holy Spirit. Christian educational philosophy tries to illustrate the possibilities to integrate faith and living with doctrines from God's words, that is the Bible." Genuine moral ability is reflective of the mentor's in a child's life (Wilhelm & Firmin, 2008). Weissbourd (2003) asserted, the moral development of students does not depend primarily on explicit character education efforts but on the maturity and ethical capacities of the adults with whom they interact-especially parents, but also teachers, coaches, and other community adults. I sorted out the content of interview in accordance with three dimensions of their homes, religious fellowship,

and kindergartens. Respectively, the details of their information are as follows:

*5.2.1.1.1 Modeling effect of family*

Mothers believed that much of what the children learned derived more from the nature of their experiences in the family setting rather than from what they are taught. Williams, Yanchar, and Jensen (2003) stated, “Real character education is not preached at you, but rather lived with you.” Anderson (2000) also advocates that character education must be embedded in the teachers’ lives so that it is taught as a part of who they are. Christian mothers’ role as the first teachers of their children is of vital importance. Thus, character education is more than a theoretical construct; rather it has tangible, concrete outworkings in students’ (children’s) lives and educational experiences. Apart from that, it must be rooted in home-life if it is to achieve maximum success. (Wilhelm & Firmin , 2008) Mothers' training is a combination of tangible and intangible, but mostly the intangible; they made use of various living situation and their own behaviors in terms of their concrete practice to affect a child’s values. This is consistent with Dewey's “situated education” and “education in life.” It is noteworthy that they intend to offer the young children a certain “control” over their lives by providing them with the knowledge of Christianity that applies to everyday lives.

I keep on reading the Bible and praying every day and it seems it has become his own habit. I’m so delighted to see the good results from him because of my influence; he sometimes “commands” the whole family to pray together, including his dad and grandmother. I wished he could be the “light and salt” in future. (Ruth)

I believe that through my behavior as parents, my kids will learn the most fundamental lessons of life, such as self-sacrifice and forgiveness.

Also, I think that the influence of my marital relationship will stay with the kids for the rest of their lives. I hardly teach them by words. If I want them to learn to apologize to others, I say sorry to the others first. When teaching my children to obey, I learned to obey my husband first. (Alice)

When I took her to the park, seeing the little flowers and grassland, I told her “Such beautiful flowers are made by God.” Little by little, she herself would say “God made this and God also made that.” I wish I could lead her to discover God and know God naturally in her life rather than instill the faith into her mechanically. Therefore, I made full use of all kinds of ready-made teaching aids in their lives. (Hannah)

A kid is his parents’ mirror. Since I became a mom, I strictly require myself to be careful of my own characters, habits and life attitudes. If I am positive, my child may be positive; if I am coward, my child may become coward too.... Because of the love of God, I’m willing to humble myself for better change. I also pushed the grandparents to do so, hehe. (Esther)

Once, she could not find her toy, I prayed with her together and looked for it, finally we found it and both of us were very happy. My desire of her life is that she could discover her gifts, develop them, and use them for the good of others and to God’s glory, just like her name. (Grace)

It is the greatest challenge to me when my child gets ill. Because I could not to do anything about it, I could only encourage my child and pray with him. After my child fully recovered, he told me he feels it was God’s work. (Esther)

It is proved that women are more concerned about ethical issues and have a higher sensitivity to religious obligations and moral duty for their children (Collins, 2000). In this regard, the mothers in this study did

reveal a Christian moral reasoning in their parenting practices. Grace did not hesitate to resign to personally accompany her daughter; this confirmed her identity again as a mother especially a Christian mother even if sometimes it will conflict with China's environment. For instance, China's statutory maternity leave only lasts for 3 to 4 months, in this case, women who are supposed to immediately return to the workplace have to entrust someone else to raise the child. As for those who attempt to extend the time staying at home, it basically means they are giving up the job. As a result, strong motivation of faith impels the mothers to be a qualified housekeeper even though it consumes time and energy but it pleases God. On identity, Christian parents do not simply see themselves as the child's parents; instead they tend to see themselves as a person in the "image of Jesus." Thus they strictly discipline their demeanor, believing in a combination of faith and life; using action to show children their best rather than just "say it" in words. "Words and deeds: monkeys see, monkeys do." Christian mothers deeply believed Bible contains the best parenting wisdom and teaching. "Combining belief and life" is the mother's educational principle; children witness an enlightenment of faith at an early stage. In this sense, they are strict with themselves. Moses' mother was quoted as a learning model. While in the real life, they fulfilled it according to their specific situation.

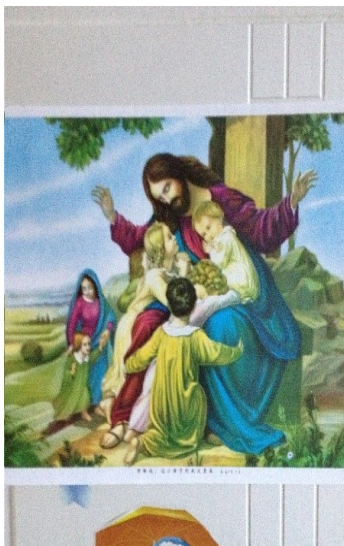
Moreover, household decor also played a role of enlightening faith. Religious decorations and furnishings drew my attention. Opening the door of Grace's European style house, you may see a picture of Jesus washing disciplines' feet in ethnic batik. In Hannah's bedroom, I saw a photo frame with the word "faith" on it put on the sill. In Ruth's home, there is a picture of Jesus and kids hung on the door of her child's room. In Alice's setting room, there is a cross on the wall painted by Alice and her son. Ruth and Alice's narrative is impressive. This is identical to the viewpoints of Christian educational experts, who think that if parents

want their children to know God's salvation, they can make their children live in a religious environment. When parents put some decorations with religious colors at home, children's pursuit and realization for their parents' religion may be aroused (Su, 2005).

Religious Decorations



**Picture 1:** A hand-drawing of a Cross on the wall



**Picture 2:** A picture of Jesus on the bedroom door

I did not put many religious decorations at home. I only hang a picture of Jesus in the living room. Every morning, I take my child to say good morning to Jesus and every night before going to bed, I say good night to Jesus as well. I want to guide my child to know Jesus in this way. (Ruth)

That was merely a graffiti done by my son, when I suddenly had a brain wave and invited him to draw a cross with me. He was so happy to join me. Then we together made this. He likes it very much. (Alice)

They attracted their children's attention toward Jesus and the Cross in the natural scene rather than using stereotyped inculcated religious discourses with authority representing powerful role models. Basically, their own experiences at school made them avoid cramming teaching and classroom teaching as much as possible. This keeps in lines with Gilness (2003), "Character education cannot be isolated, codified, and packaged into tidy little instructional units in a how-to manual." On the other hand, embodied in the standpoint of biblical principle, however, they were absolutely obedient and comply with everything. The parenting is flexible but not compromising of biblical principle, and embodies the dialectical unification of Constructivism and Perennialism.

#### 5.2.1.1.2 Connecting with Christian community

For Christian mothers, there exists a very active social circle- the Christian community, including family and church fellowships were a consistency that emanated from a religious containment and could be constructed and provided. Family fellowship means that several or even dozens of Christians gather together on days other than Sundays, in order to communicate something about Christianity. This type of fellowship is normally held at home. In addition, Wechat<sup>68</sup> becomes another emerging method for exchanging information. There are some cell phone magazines on Wechat such as *Give Best to Your Children*, *Life of Christians*, and *Churches on Wechat*. There are also some articles about education, such as *Answers for Educating Children from XX Pastor*, *Ten Aspects of Praying for Your Children*, *Prayer for*

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<sup>68</sup> Wechat is Chinese Twitter; smartphone software that allows people to quickly send text and photos, also supporting voice intercom.



*Blessing Children.* These articles will guide the practical parenting of Christian parents. Twice a week Christian mothers have the opportunity to hear a lecture for Christian parents at church. In recent years, sermons occasionally involve information on parenting. Generally, pastors in person interpret how to educate children based on the biblical principles. Both Alice and Grace have family altar<sup>69</sup>-which means a Christian fellowship at home, Grace's fellowship is held once a week at her home in an organized and relatively official style. This event consists with around 12 people, such as her neighbors, relatives and friends, most of them couples. Grace's husband is the organizer. He got converted to Christianity earlier than anyone in this interview. Alice's fellowship is more casual and free in time and space since it includes the couples and children.

Aside from the above, Sunday school plays an indispensable role in Christian parenting. According to the interviews, all five mothers have experiences of participating in Sunday school class long or short. Grace and her husband started to send their daughter there since she was 2.5 years old. Alice's two sons also followed their parents to Sunday school every week; the first son listens to the class on his own while the second son in the parent's arms. Ruth only visited Sunday school several times, mainly due to the far distance (the nearest school is a 1 hour drive away). Esther once invited a Christian "sister" for one-to-one homeschooling when the child was around 3 years old, but the class stopped three months later for the course was beyond the boy's understanding. Hannah, as a full-time teacher at Sunday school, shared the spiritual time by praising and rhythm with her daughter at home since she was at very early age. Even though some of them mention the

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<sup>69</sup> Narrowly, family altar means in a Christian family, parents and children practice religious activities together at home. In this research, from the family education perspective, I define it as children's religious education acquired from their parents through reading the Bible, singing hymns, prayers or attending Bible study.

disadvantages of their Sunday school, such as “the class is out of order,” “the classroom is too small,” some likewise showed appreciation for the teachers. Accordingly, parents viewed the Sunday school as a safe and empowering training institution for their children.

They have done well and they were not professional teachers. There are rich and colorful contents, such as games, rhythm, and reciting scriptures, which my daughter loved to be part of. These took a lot of vigor and time to prepare; I could understand their hardness and limited condition. (Alice)



**Picture 3:** A Sunday school Homework (done by a 3-year-old girl)

Despite the fact that teaching at Sunday school gave priority to training the recitation of Scriptures and prayers, which is the embodiment of Perennialism, the teaching method was not mechanical or rigid, but enjoyable and centered around “problem-solving.” Parents were invited to guide the children to carry out activities in the life practice. Above is homework feedback drawn from teachers of 1-5-year-old children by teachers at random. The homework list is trimmed out of an ordinary A4 paper on white perforated sheets. There is a picture of a

girl's head praying on the top of the homework list, the deadline on the side and the baby's name on the right. The words in the next line in bold are the first assignment: recite The *Hands of Praying*, which should be a children's song taught by teachers at class. The first homework is filling the blanks. It requires that the performance of babies in a week be marked using “^.” or “X.” The first line and the second line are records of “thanks for dinner prayer” and “prayer before sleeping” from Sunday to Saturday. The third line requires “restraint on eating ice cream.” There is an “X” on Friday and the rest are smiling faces. Judging from the clumsy writing on the answer sheets, we can see that they are finished by children. Moreover the answers differing in color show that all the answers are written according to the required time. On one hand we can see the love and thought of teachers assigning homework. On the other hand, we can see the cooperation of children and parents. In fact, teachers often mention the improvement and changes of parents aside from children.

We teach kids the most important way to solve real problems in their life, such as praying and reciting the Bible. We try to mold the kids by various ways. Through us God leads the sheep of His own. (Sunday school teacher)

Correspondingly, this is the application of child-centered Deweyan Constructivism with the biblical content. Again, two theories of Perennialism and Constructivistic learning were employed.

### ***5.2.2 Reflecting on Bible-based preschools***

#### *5.2.2.1 Overview of Bible-based preschools in China.*

The Ministry of National Education “Nine-Year Compulsory Education Full-Time Primary & Junior High School Curriculum Program” in which it is clearly stipulated that: “subjects and activities must be performed as per the principle of integrating theory with

practice, students should be given education gradually in the field of dialectical materialism, historical materialism and atheism.” According to this regulation, having the same nature, religion and feudal superstition are deemed as non-science and are forbidden from school. Accordingly, it is almost impossible for children to receive religious education at school in China. But now, Bible-based schools have emerged in some regions in China. There are all kinds of related factors: first of all, legal policy encourages the establishment of private education; free market economy leads towards the idea of opening; surely, Christian parents’ urgent demand to transfer their faith to the young generation is the most direct one. As far as the Christian parents I know, all of them have showed intentions of choosing a Christian kindergarten for their children. They believed that the congruence of cultural values in the home and the school is conducive. Meanwhile the parents, especially those that have older children, maintained that the regular public preschool highlighted the incongruence of the secular culture and conservative Christian culture. As earlier seeing, they did show demand of children’s education on faith and character because they believed the Christian cultural values were explicitly upheld by Bible-based preschool so as to keep a continuity of religion. The spiritual atmosphere especially won the mothers’ hearts under extensive pressure coming from the all-pervasive influence of a secular “Chinese culture.”

I want to offer my child a good defensive system, first for his health, then for his mind. Thus wherever he goes in the future, even if he studied abroad, he will have a moral bottom line. He will become a person with God in his heart and never do unpermitted things. I think Christian kindergartens can help him to set up a good belief foundation and cultivate good characters. The principal is a person who has good faith and doesn’t think about profits a lot. (Grace)

I like the attitude of teachers in here. The parents and grandparents could feel teachers really love children, so we trust them and we believe that my child will be taken good care of. The kindergarten my child used to go disturbed my nerve, because the staff looked forward to having benefits from you; if they don't see benefits from you, they treated your child coldly. My son used to be sick a lot at that time. There were 3 months that I had not sent him to any kindergarten. (Esther)

The parents believed that their children were in a protective environment that reinforced moral values by helping them to nurture their convictions and guard their devout way of life (Pak, 2004). In order to make further investigation into Christian preschool education, I visited several institutions, and finally chose a school being set for three-year-old. Currently, the number of the students in this school is about 100. Character education is distinctive feature compared to regular kindergarten; it sounded more attractive for regular parents and acceptable for government rather than using the words “religion” or “spirituality.” On the website of the educational curriculum, it is stated that “Sixty character traits, such as kindness, loyalty, and honesty, are taught within the curriculum. Students can observe character development in the true-to-life character strips and then apply the Godly character lessons to their own lives.”<sup>70</sup> According to the researcher, teachers focused on one character each week. At the same time, with the corresponding training, they strengthen the children’s application in their real life (detailed curriculum can be seen at the back of the appendix). Moreover, teachers required themselves to practice such characteristics because they thought seriously about their positions. In their minds, they were teaching the moral backbone of the society and the religious leaders of tomorrow.

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<http://www.christian-education.org/christian-education/curriculum/ace-curriculum/>

I think the previous school I used to work at was limited in the plasticity of children's character. I want to learn about this aspect, but that school can't give me such an opportunity. I come here because of the introduction of a friend in church. I feel that it was full of love here. Colleagues get along with each other. When we work, we will pay more attention to our behaviors and gestures, because the children will imitate. We are also careful about our words, so that the children won't be hurt. You don't know if anyone of them will become an influential leader. (Teacher A)



Picture 4: School's Bible-based Character Statement

In terms of teachers, it has ten in total, two of who are foreign and all of who are Christians. Chinese teachers teach with bilingual education, and they are also responsible for the daily life of the children. In terms of the teaching material, they use two series of material-the original Bible-based one in English, as well as the one commonly used in Chinese public schools. According to the schedule made in November 2013, professional courses include: storytelling, language arts, Chinese performance, math, science, music, dance, corner time, circle time, and

devotional. Based on my observation, the class of “Chinese performance” generally is a subject to teach children Ancient Chinese poetry and *Di Zi Gui*, ect. As for “math, science, music,” these are based on the Montessori curriculum system. So to speak, this a Christianized schedule that has blended Chinese and Western culture. “Storytelling” is basically Bible storytelling told by both Chinese teachers and foreign teachers. “Devotional” is the time all the students and staff gather in the auditorium and listen to the Principal’s speech about morality. Before the speech, all the students and staff will sing the Chinese national song and make a vow by reciting the school motto in English “I swear I will be loyal to the biblical truth and the Christian faith; I swear I will live out Christian character of honesty, integrity and love” is part of this motto. Therefore, this subject is actually a character education lesson; the principal’s role is more like a priest. Singing the national anthem reminded me that this happens not in a church but in a Chinese school. Definitely, it is a Christian education time following common Chinese school culture. Here at the Bible-based kindergarten in China, two cultures are both embodied.

Nevertheless, from the teachers I learned that it is forbidden to bring the Bible into school, not to speak of reading the Bible at class. Teachers themselves are informed to not to read the Bible in the office. Kazamias (1966) points out that the school system is related in several ways to the political system and the general political culture of the society. Hence, schooling experiences reflect and refract the power differentials of the society (Pak, 2004). In this sense, Bible-based preschools have to submit to the rule of Chinese government, otherwise they will be outlawed. As a result, both the implementation of Christian faith and so-called character education are inescapably under the supervision of “Chinese culture.”

*5.2.2.2 Consideration of Sinicization of Bible-based kindergarten.*

On the other hand, Christian parents hold complicated attitude towards Bible-based preschools when considering their children's future. Some parents are optimistic, regarding it as a new road different from the previous one of exam-oriented education and a good way to keep children's independence and offer religious education and character education. Others prefer to take a watch-and-see attitude or even a negative attitude, thinking that sending children to Christian schools means preparing to send children to study abroad in the future. In fact, the kindergarten I have interviewed has another name, "American express"; students who have graduated from this school can go directly into the American education system because their diploma is admitted by American schools and they don't need to attend the English language examinations. This market positioning is done to meet the needs of the parents who request it for academic success. Surely more parents are non-Christians who want their children to learn the knowledge of primary school in advance. However, for Christian parents who are not willing to send their children abroad, this goal has become a roadblock because their aim is to train up children's faith and character, not to travel for further study.

Many Christian parents told me that they really hope that their children can always study in this school, but they do not know whether the school can develop as we expected. They should also adapt to the nine-year compulsory education, and many of them don't plan to send their kids studying abroad. I'm not sure they will withstand it or not.  
(Teacher B)

Christian preschool, in the minds of a considerable proportion of parents, is somewhat more of a Western-style school rather than a religious one. Given the context, a child may undergo an "identity



crisis” at the personal level in a cultural setting that seems to embody a clash of cultural ideals that necessitates negotiations within the self (S. Y. Pak, 2004). For Hannah, one of our main informants, on the question of choosing kindergarten for her child, she appeared to be bewildered.

I think Christian kindergartens put many parents in a dilemma. Should their children on earth be taught in a Chinese way or in a Western way? What kind of life will they lead when they grow up? What if they can't go abroad in the future since what is taught in Christian kindergarten is completely different from that in other kindergartens? Those parents who send their children to Christian kindergartens must have strong faith. As far as I know, they worry that their children cannot merge into the mainstream society in China. So our way out is sending our daughter abroad when she gets older. (Hannah)

Besides the conflict between deciding on education domestically or abroad, there exists a tension between academic performance and character education related to whether Christian mothers choose Bible-based preschools. In terms of the present situation, low pressure is one of its characteristics; however, some Christian parents demanded that the school pay at least equal attention to performance as well as character education. Accordingly, between the academic performance and the character education there also exists an underlying tension.

Students are supposed to adapt from Western educational system to a Chinese educational system. They already have the bilingual learning pressure I just worry that this fairly intense learning will destroy their creativity. I just worry that the parents' opinions will influence the school's original educational goals. If so, the school will lose her taste. (Teacher A)

Choosing Christian preschool is a high risk because it is uncertain whether children could merge back into the mainstream society or not.

Thus, these parents may send their children to regular public schools and take the responsibility for their children's religious education by themselves. In fact, these parents account for most of the Christian parents in China. It should be said that at this point, my informants belong to the minority of Christian mothers.

Now I often pray to God to prepare a kindergarten for my child because only God knows which kindergarten fits her and is good for her growth. This cannot be judged by external conditions or the expenses of kindergartens. If it had happened several years ago, certainly I would have chosen the most expensive one. I have no problems with the expenses at all. As a mother and a steward, I should follow God's wills and make choices for my child. I just want God to guide my child. If God really wants my child to stay in China, how could she face the society in the future since what was taught in this kindergarten is quite different from the teaching contents of other schools? Each step of child raising is so important that even if the teachers are good, I still can't make a decision easily. (Hannah)

What the teachers mentioned is virtually a problem of localization of Christianized educational system in Chinese soil. As mentioned before, Chinese parents are stricter with their children's school work than are those from Western countries. Christian parents expect Christian kindergartens not only help their children to attain a good religious education, but to also help them to improve their academic performance. Meanwhile, parents are worried about the unclear future of their children since there is no successful case yet. The conflict between the high expectation of parents' and grandparents' overprotection and the original characteristics of the education is a kind of tension. Besides, the increasing tuition is a big challenge for parents.

According to Chang (2011), adopting a more systematic approach, character education is divided into: 1) a cognitive approach related to moral reasoning and value clarification; 2) an effective approach with moral motivation; and 3) an experience-centered approach to voluntary activities. From above, it is illustrated that the Chinese Christian mothers' character and moral education is empirical. It is more than a mere theoretical or esoteric concept. Rather, the construct represents actual behaviors and visible means. The ability of parents and teachers to model good character is of the utmost importance.

### ***5.2.3 Impact on children and mothers themselves: childrearing is also motherhood-nurturing***

#### *5.2.3.1 Impact on children.*

S. Y. Pak (2004) points out that “as the students became increasingly aware of the discrepancies between their religious education and the realities of the secular society, they reacted with two dissimilar responses. The first was to entrench themselves within their group and reject the cultural values of the dominant, secular society while steadfastly defending their moral reasoning. The other was to accommodate what the secular culture had to offer by expanding one's frame of reference to make oneself relevant in a secular environment.” For Chinese Christian families, the expectant result is definitely the latter. What is the detailed influence on children of the parents' Christian religious education? I discussed this from two perspectives of the children's current performance and long-term performance. I intended to show in a more general perspective how parents' religious behaviors influence their children's beliefs.

Short-term effects: Alice told me, smilingly, that when she hesitated to do one thing at a time, her first son gave her reason and courage to be brave. He told her that God created man courageous. Once, Grace's daughter heard the baby in the neighbor's family had no milk powder, so

she urgently wanted to send her own milk powder to “share”<sup>71</sup> with the baby. When she feels afraid to go to the toilet by her own at night, she is not afraid when thinking of God. Hannah’s children are still at the babbling stage, but there is also a feedback from the teaching of mother. For example, when mother asks “who does Jesus love?” the baby will point to himself, which means “Jesus loves me.” And if the child lost his temper, the mother will open the praise music, then the child's emotions will ease a lot. Tamminen (1994, as cited in Argyle, 2005) surveyed about 2,500 children who, together with their parents, are of the Lutheran faith. It was found that when these children are alone or are in a dilemma with moral problems, 57% of children aged from 9 to 10 will look for God to help. This conclusion is in line with the text.<sup>72</sup>

Long-term effects: According to the study by Argyle (1996), when children accept beliefs from childhood in their adolescence,<sup>73</sup> there will appear a “belief awakening”, which means they are more determined to be religious or give up. And this “awakening” is associated with physiological changes in puberty. The conflicts between faith in childhood and rational thoughts in adolescence are resolved at the age of 20. After 30, the views towards prayer, religious values, and the consciousness of religious importance have shown in trends to increase with age.<sup>74</sup> Correspondingly, the adolescent years are critical in the development of a coherent sense of self and the subsequent emergence of identity. As Loewles & Lodat (1967) maintained that the religious influence from parents on children in adolescence period has a downward trend, while the influence of the peer group has a rise

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<sup>71</sup> “Sharing,” coming from Christian doctrines, is a common word among Christians. This word is used for expressing the idea of loving one another. This is also children’s imitation of their parents’ words and deeds.

<sup>72</sup> *Religious and Social Psychology*, P191

<sup>73</sup> According to Argyle’s age division, adolescence begins for boys at 13.5 years old while for girls it is 12.5 years old.

<sup>74</sup> *Religious and Social Psychology*, P81-87.

(retrieved from Argyle, 2005). For adolescent children, the secular society, especially the world outlook and values of their peer group, have a huge influence on them. In the process, the beliefs accepted in childhood will inevitably be shaken up or even deviate.

Eriksson (1962) fully affirmed the influence of belief from parents to children. "Children's religious view is the common result of the religious view of parents and identity degree of their parents."<sup>75</sup> In addition, Freud's "value internalization theory" argues that a person's values are internalized to people through family, school and social education. Family is in the first place. Correspondingly, parents are a key factor in whether their offspring inherit the parents' beliefs or not. If the parents maintain a healthy and intimate parent-child relationship, and set themselves as an example, then the children may probably inherit their parents' beliefs, and are likely to follow their values. Otherwise it may undergo a tortuous process, or even end in failure. This can be verified through the interview with Sunday school teachers: teenagers will have their own thoughts and belief, but sometimes they have doubts because they found that things were not the same as what was taught in school. If parents do not believe God (such children are generally taken by grandparents to Sunday school) or believe one but do another, they will slowly drift away from the church. But if the parents both believe in God, their children generally tend to believe in God too.

John is such a case, "he is a junior in a public middle school, and has participated in the kid's choir in our church since he was very little. Now he is in charge of accompaniment at Sunday school. His parents are both church volunteers, and his mother is studying theology in the seminary. Everyone in the church knows them," her Sunday school teacher told me. Thus I made a further interview with John's parents and the content analysis as follows. (1) The parent-child relationship: the atmosphere at

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<sup>75</sup> Written by Michael Argyle and translated by Chen Biao(2005), *Introduction to Religious Psychology* P41.

home is very harmonious and full of democracy. When they encounter problems, they usually discuss solutions together (with children). No matter how busy the parents are, there is a fixed time every day for communication with their children, so there is no privacy between parents and children. (2) The peer relations: children study in secular schools, but faith is free. Because classmates have a good relationship, sometimes they bring classmates to the church, or go to watch the Gospel movies with their friends. Children regard “serving the Lord” and “loving your neighbors as yourself” as the code of conduct and their ideal is to become a businessman in the future and marry a priest and go together with their parents to preach the Gospel. The above mentioned typical case of a Christian family and the other cases in this text illustrated the profound influence from Christianity.

#### *5.2.3.2 Impact on mothers themselves*

Mothers have also unconsciously changed while employing constructivism; in cultivating the character education of their children; their characters were also constructed. Either mothers or children, the ultimate goal is consistent, which is to tend to the character of Christ; the core description is love (Apape), and the characteristics derived are gentleness, obedience, etc. For mothers, the greatest change is to learn to be obedient and humble. Hence, using a constructivistic approach to approach the Perennialist Christian characters in family life situation is a Christian mother's philosophy of education. In the socialist, Communist China, the feminists have had this rooted in their mind for over half a century. In this situation, that is a phenomenon called “hen-pecked.”<sup>76</sup> It is a countercurrent phenomenon for Christian females to be willing to give up their “queen throne.” In that case, in the context of feminism in mainstream culture, it is rather difficult to be obedient to her husband;

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<sup>76</sup> Li Lihai (2011). The development of modern Chinese Feminism. *New Generation, 1*.

people easily equate biblical obedience to the patriarchal obedience in feudal society. Christian mothers also appeared to be unique because they hold by the spouse-centered family ethics within the context of most Chinese families living under the child-centered family ethic. Consequently, as all the respondents of Christian mothers said, “Childrearing is not only meant for a child, but for the mother.” In other words, the process of raising children is also one of motherhood-forming and nurturing; this is consistent with the Peschke’s statement (Peschke, 2003) that “A child is contributing for his/her parents’ sanctification.”

During the time working in an early learning center, I learned that mothers need to have scientific knowledge and skills. During these two years, I finally found the recourse to wisdom. A good mother should have wisdom to manage her home and show filial obedience, so I should change myself first, and I wished my husband to also know God. (Ruth)

I used to quarrel with my husband when we made any decision because I thought I was cleverer and had more abilities than him. In our society, women always want to wield power. Women have preferred to control men since Eve. This is the main reason why we fought. But now I became more obedient to him. I think I was completely wrong. God won’t be happy when I fight for the power with my husband. The reason why our family was so mess is because I messed up the order; the correct order should be: God first, husband second, wife third, and fourth children. I feel very happy when following my husband’s opinion, really. It is a big change; I was not obedient to him at all before. (Alice)

There are no bad children only bad parents. If the child has a problem, I’ll check myself. If it is found that is my problem, I’ll change myself first. Only in this way I will teach the children who live according to God. (Grace)

Not long ago, my mother-in-law lived in the hospital for a while. My husband asked me to take care of her, while I have my daughter and church work to deal with too, you know. So it means I have to go between home, hospital, and church every day. Well, I would definitely be mad if it happened before, but now, I believe it is a test from God, so I did as much as I could to take care of her without any complaint. I think I have passed the test because I feel very peaceful and joyful. (Hannah)

I deeply believe that childrearing is also motherhood-nurturing. When children reach 3 years old, I gradually learned to give up my thoughts and gave my business over to him, and I become a good “helper.” It is very difficult to me, because I am used to giving orders for all those years; sometimes my rationality tells me that his decision is wrong. However I choose obedience. This greatly improves our marriage quality. (Esther)

#### ***5.2.4 Constructivist Learning on Confucian Tradition and Globalization through a Christian Lens***

##### *5.2.4.1 Children Take Precedence over Career*

First of all, whether learning Confucian tradition or globalization, Christian mothers looked very proudly on their position of First Teacher, therefore they attach great importance to the accompany and teaching to their children personally. When there is a conflict between career and children, children take priority. The statement of a virtuous woman<sup>77</sup> in the Bible is the highest standard of womanhood. According to Proverbs, a virtuous woman is supposed to be very much husband-and family-oriented, and her business is also home-based (Feeney, 2007).<sup>78</sup> What

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<sup>77</sup> Quoted from *Proverbs 31:10, KJV*

<sup>78</sup> <http://www.jimfeeney.org/virtuous-woman-eyes-God.html>



the mothers described and explained during the interview proved this again. When the six-month maternity leave was over, Grace employed a babysitter to raise her daughter with her own mother until the daughter was one--and-a-half years old. Since it was difficult for Grace to balance career and family, she finally made a choice: quit her job and become a stay-at-home mother. She didn't come back to work until her daughter was two-and-one-half, the age for going to kindergarten. She then applied for a position with less money, but more leisure time.

I hope my daughter will not face such challenges between career and family. There are differences between man and woman from when God created them. The wife should be a glorious Helper (this saying is from a popular female Christian book--Created to be His Help Meet).<sup>79</sup> No one can replace the role of a mother. (Grace)

Hannah had a full-time job at church before giving birth to a baby. One year later, she faced the situation of coming back to work. During her work time, she had to ask her daughter's grandparents (non-believers) to help raise the child, which sometimes annoyed her. Esther and Alice are freelancers, so they can manage their work time freely after giving birth to their children. Before her son was one and one-half years old, Esther was completely a stay-at-home mother. The family income was totally from her husband. With her son growing older and older, she revived her work time gradually. During the daytime, she works and after work, she stays with her son. Alice was a stay-at-home mother when giving birth to her first child. After her second child was born, she opened a small restaurant with her husband. The couple takes the burden of family, business, and children's education together. Ruth raised her child completely by herself before her child was one and one half years old. Her husband worked in another city, so her mother-in-law

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<sup>79</sup> Debi Pearl (2004), Zhang Lili, Trans. (2011). *Created to be His Help Meet*. Nanfang Publishing House.

moved to live with her. In order to learn more parenting skills, she worked at an early educational institution when her child was between 1.5 and 2.5 years old. For what she had experienced, she said,

I think God sends me to work at an early educational institution because he wants to tell me that my child is my heritage. If you fail to take care of your own heritage, how could you take the responsibility for others' children? When my child goes to kindergarten in the future, I hope my work time won't clash with the time of sending and picking up children. (Ruth)

#### *5.2.4.2 The Implement of Early Education*

70 Hou & 80 Hou parents experienced the two extreme periods “education is the highest” and “education devaluation.” They experienced the awkward situation from the “an unusually lucky person” to “graduation is unemployment” (Xiao, 2009). On one hand, they pursued higher education and studied overseas. A part of this generation of parents accepted the higher education, so no matter in feeding or education, they followed the “view of science,” refer to books and listen to experts' opinions; on the other hand, they worried about constraining it again and refused the education which was only “to study for the exam.” In terms of self-learning, mothers generally highly value the accumulation of parental knowledge, and they seek help from books, friends and the internet. As for developing children's education, this was carried out through the early education institutions or done themselves through book-based learning and life-based learning. Their nonreligious education for children was not limited to time and place, which was anytime and anywhere; besides, there was no fixed standard of teaching or textbooks. At this point, the parenting is absolutely Constructivist. Esther's early education was based on children's initiative and spontaneity; Alice's way of education was quite similar with

contextualized-Constructivist learning, stressing cultivating exploration and hands-on ability; Grace's parenting was focused on expanding children's various "experiences" through travelling. The non-Christian content without obvious conflict with the biblical principles was also adopted. Overall, mothers were prepared to incorporate the "difference" and "plurality."

I think I have already taught my children when I put these staffs there. I have posted many cards and pictures about shapes, colors, and animals on the wall. Children under three are very sensitive to shapes...Every time when he walks to his bedroom, he could see a long line of cards on the wall for teaching children. These cards and pictures are about various flowers, Chinese Pinyin, colors, national flags of various countries. (Esther)

In May, when other parents don't dare to let their children to go play in the river, my husband takes my sons to throw stones in the river. We took them to the botanical garden when they were only two. My husband takes them to the park as long as the weather is good...We rarely buy books for him. We don't like to tell stories to him, we train him to read. There are words he doesn't understand we encourage him to draw. We buy an ipad and there are a few apps for learning words. He uses the ipad to learn words everyday by himself. When he just about 4 years old he could work with his father to assemble the furniture. The wooden board is twice as his height. (Alice)

When my daughter was a little baby, I took her to travel. Others may think it is useless since a little baby knows nothing about what he sees or hears. I think the outside world is like a three-dimensional book and book is good for everyone. Taking my little daughter to the outside world is just like letting her to read a three-dimensional book. It will be good for her. (Grace)

As a group, Chinese Christians have performed and will continue to perform well on the responsibilities and duties both as Christians and Chinese. (Zhuo, 2000). In terms of treating Confucian tradition, mothers' attitude appeared to be open. On the bookshelves of their homes, Chinese classics books could be found, such as the Three Character Classic, *Di Zi Gui* (Standards for Being a Good Child) and Tang Poems and Song Lyrics. However, for learning Confucian tradition, parents valued Chinese identity more rather than the knowledge itself. This is the side of the sinicization of Christian parents.

I think there is still some need to read books like the Three Character Classic book; some methods and experiences are worth our using for reference. But the opinions of the older generation are basically not scientific. (Hannah)

To teach children to know polite manners, respected of the aged, and pecking order is only natural for we Chinese; it is very necessary for a child, we shouldn't ever lose them any time. I told my son to recite *Di Zi Gui* when he was less than two years old. (Esther)

I think Three Character Classic is valuable to some extent. My husband and I quite accept the Chinese feudal ethics and rites. (Ruth)

In my opinion, traditional teaching could be either good or bad but we need it for we are Chinese, especially Chinese character and family affection and family ties. The premise of immigrants to Canada in the future is the children playing a good foundation in Chinese history or something. (Alice)

Their underlying logic was that children's views were formulated both in terms of the standard of Christianity but also the goals of regular public school set by Ministry of National Education. So to speak, Christians were involved in Sinicization simultaneously when "Chinese

culture” was Christianized. This is consistent with Zhuo Xiping’s Mutually Adapting Theory.

Then I raised the question “*When your child is taught about evolution and atheism in the future schooling, how would you react in parenting him or her?*” in order to know how they deal with the contradictory dual messages that will become parts of their children’s learning no matter whether the parents are willing or not. To my surprise, mothers did not appear to be much bewildered, as if they did not ever regard it as a problem. It even made me reflect if I am too conservative about that. The family education setting was open-climate, and in such an environment, the members are more prone to develop the critical mentality in young minds so as to have them question, doubt, and recast the intended message to fit the meanings of their own existence in a real, experiential context (S. Y. Pak, 2004) though conspicuously, Christianity was anchored as absolute truth. For instance, Hanna’s response is as follows:

I will not deliberately avoid her listening to the teaching of evolution and atheism; hiding is neither necessary nor useful. Instead, at the appropriate time, I will permit him contact and make her do her own thinking and comparison. I’ll also tell her the story about her birth. The truth is the truth. We believe that she will make the right judgment, and it is good for his faith foundation to withstand the test. (Hannah)

I will not force her to totally rejecting learning anything except Christianity. The world God created is colorful. Either Confucian ethics or modern science is necessary to know about even if some are fake truth. However I will enable her to tell truth from the fake. (Grace)

In the following, I will exhibit mothers’ parenting vividly through a child’s activities during one week. This is the daily routine of Hannah’s only daughter Minnie. I will describe the content specifically in the tone

of Minnie. Through Hannah’ one-week-childrearing of her 18-month-old baby, we can have a feel for her real parenting practice.

**Table 5. Hannah’s Weekly Childrearing Schedule**

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
6:00 - 8:00	getting up, the eight family members having breakfast together						
8:00 - 11:00	Playing at a park near home	Playing at a park near home	Playing at a park near home	Going to an early educational center	Going to church	Playing at home with grand	Planning to attend Sunday school at the age of two
11:00 - 2:00	Lunch and afternoon nap				Staying at home with grand ma, singing hymns and reading Bible	ma, watching TV, playing toys	Playing at home with dad and grand ma
3:00 - 5:00	Watching A Cute Tiger <sup>80</sup> , dancing, singing, reading some books about children’ songs and ancient poems.						
5:00 - 8:00	The whole family of eight having dinner together, taking a walk with mum and dad						
9:00	Bedtime, listening to stories about moralities and from the Bible, mum’s personal prayer after Minnie falls asleep.						

<sup>80</sup> A Japanese cartoon for helping children to form good living habits and get some common sense of life.

I'm a pretty little girl of 14 months old (at the time of interview). Except for mum and dad, my grandpa and grandma also live with me. They live at the bedroom in the south and we live at the bedroom in the north. My aunt and uncle live upstairs. I was born in a family of eight. It is really rare in cities. Every morning, we have breakfast together. From Monday to Wednesday, grandma does housework at home and I go to the park with mum in the morning. In the park, I see many trees, flowers and grass. Mum often squats and says, "Look, sweetie, the flowers are so beautiful, aren't they? They are all created by God! How great our God is!" Sometimes I also play with other kids. On Thursday, mum takes me to the early educational center. There are many other kids as old as me. Mum has selected a feeling training course and a cognition course. Sometimes I also learn some music and drawing. In the afternoon, mum teaches me at home. We dance, sing, read ancient poems, watch *A Cute Tiger*, and play with toys. I love all these so much. In the evening, dad, aunt, and uncle come back from their work. We gather together again to have supper. My aunt, uncle and little cousin play for a while with me. After supper, I take a walk with mum and dad. On the way, mum and dad often ask me about how my day is. Then we come back home and prepare to go to bed. Mum often reads some stories to me at this time. Sometimes she reads Bible stories to me. Recently I am very fond of Study Bible Day by Day. After I fall asleep, mum often pray for me and for herself. From Friday to Sunday, mum works at church and I stay at home with grandma. (my mum's mum). When I take an afternoon nap, she sings hymns to me, just like what my mum does. She often says "God blesses you!" to me. On Saturday, my grandma (dad's mum) comes to accompany me. She puts many toys on the floor and lets me play. Sometimes she plays Huangmei Opera to me. On Sunday, dad plays with me at home after he comes back from church. Mum says that I can't go to church now because I am too little.

She will take me to church to worship God with other kids when I am two

Hannah's parenting presents the Constructivist approach both on faith education and non-faith education, Nevertheless, in the process, constant transferring of faith could be seen in Perennialist way. Praying, reading Bible, and going to Sunday school is routine and carried out in the classroom led by teachers or mothers themselves. Although most of the parenting content is similar with the general families, mothers differentiated the significance of their parenting with the non-Christians. In contemporary family education, parents generally have the consciousness of scientific education and educational behavior, but the "shadow" of the traditional family education still exists, such as the educational purpose of utilitarianism and high expectations, also the education-related belief of "learning is the highest," and thinking much of intellect and less of morality in terms of education content. The utilitarian family education has had a relationship with the market economy while Christian mothers' parenting is the removal of secular utilitarian. Though non-Christians are inclined to respect children's individual ideas, however, there is an essential difference between Christians and non-Christians in recognizing children's nature of subject.

First of all, Christian parents think they are called to be parents and have been entrusted with the task of raising children by God. That is why they take responsibility for their children while don't treat children as their own treasure. (Chi W. Huen, 2011, quoted from a secondary source of Hauerwas, *The Moral Value of the Family*) Their training aimed to equip the child to be a "good soldier of Christ" in the future.

<p>Both my father-in-law and mother-in-law (non-believers) have great ambitions for my child. But I don't. When talking about the child's</p>
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future occupation, they even want him to be the Prime Minister. In their opinions, the future generations must be more and more excellent. Many of my friends also hold high hopes for their children. But I don't know why children's life must be more brilliant than their parents'. No one is perfect before God. I just want my child to live easily and no matter what kind of occupations they will take, I just want him to be happy all the time. (Esther)

My expectations for my child have once changed. Before we converted to Christianity, we really wanted him to become a successful man and we also wanted to help him to be successful at any cost. What we provided for him were mainly materials, such as money, networks, and health. We didn't want our child to lose at the starting line. But we did everything only by ourselves. Now, I put my child in the hands of God. My greatest wish is that he can follow God throughout his lifetime and never leave the Heavenly Father's Word. But my husband still wants to save much money for our son, and even for our son's son...When we chose a name for our son, we just preferred a novel one. So we chose his name through the Internet. If we could choose a name for our son now, certainly we would search for a name in the Bible. (Ruth)

Secondly, Christian family ethics have broken the traditional boundary of Chinese kinship, rather it gives rise to the super-consanguineous ethic that parents and children are all equal in front of God, having their own independent personalities. Hence, the parenting attitudes and goals are bound to be different to the Chinese majority of nonreligious parents. Alice is very explicit for the goal of children's education, and Hannah was more reflective of her role.

Even before my first-born son was born, I believe that he was a reward from God. Whatever he learns, I know in the future, my son will

serve God with all his life, no matter whether he becomes a pastor or a preacher. The meaning of his name is “glory and grace.” (Alice)

Children are heritage. We must understand children’s traits and characteristics if we want to educate and serve children well. Then, we can help children to solve their problems. I treat my child just like how God treats me. I think there are no bad children but only bad parents. So I must change myself first. When I am with my child, I pay even more attention to my words and deeds. (Hannah)

Furthermore, as I predicted earlier, their parenting of early education was fulfilled in a Christianized process as explaining Confucian thoughts and scientific concepts in Christian words and biblical thoughts.

#### *5.2.4.3 The Conduct of Grand-parenting*

As mentioned before, the coexistence of parents-parenting and grandparents-parenting is very prevailing in Chinese families. The characteristic of father-son centered and husband-wife centered are both found which makes the dialectical unity of the extended family and nuclear family; the collective orientation and individual orientation. As for the Christian family, the loyalty to God and the filial piety to parents are reflected at the same time.

We live together because we can take care of each other. After all, my parents are old; they are at the time to enjoy family happiness. They should enjoy family happiness and it is very good for kids to grow up in a big family, they are healthier and have more family affection. After all, we Chinese look high on family ties, don’t we? Generally, they don’t intervene in our parenting. The kid is given by God. (Hannah’s husband)

When he said “our family,” I had to make sure if it was his family with Hannah, or the one including his parents’ family because the tones

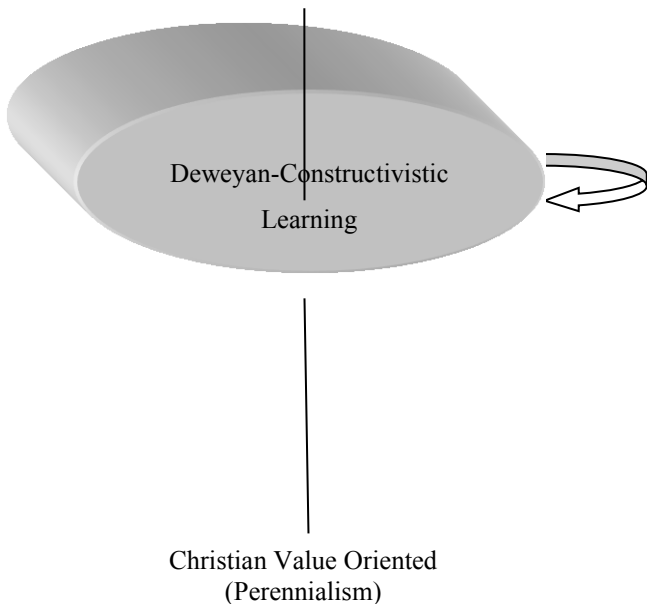
of the two families are very similar; he emphasized children's educational responsibility from his nuclear family, and also welcomed the involvement of grandparents' family. Consanguineous ideas deeply rooted in Chinese culture, while the Christian faith would also not shake, formed the localization of the biblical principle that "man should leave his parents." In this sense, I interpreted it as a manifestation of Sinicized Christian faith.

On the basis of above understanding, I further modified the "Dual Educational Theory of Perennialism and Constructivism" with a more appropriate description of "Cross-Shaped Parenting Philosophy." As shown in the figure below, the horizontal surface of Constructivism represents the parents' employment of educational philosophy in all forms of educational activities except faith-morality; educational method emphasizes that the parenting way changes when the situation changes. This philosophy is in terms of stressing children's initiative, so it is child-centered. Nevertheless, for the core content of faith-character education as well as the principle, Christian parents' philosophy presented as Perennialism is represented by the vertical line, which does not vary over time, space, and circumstance. Moreover, it thinks highly of the authority of teachers; so to speak, it is teacher-centered. The horizontal surface revolves around the vertical line that represents all the Deweyan-Constructivistic activities that are oriented by Christian value. Of note, the learning method of Christianity could still be constructivistic under Chinese contextualization. The horizontal surface gives expression to the dynamic and multi-aspect state since the constructivists rely on uncertainty, reject metaphysics, and emphasize method over content. In contrast, the longitudinal axis embodies the static and single-track state as Gutek (2005) asserts that Maritain and Dewey are polar opposites on philosophical orientation, human nature, the learner, curriculum, and methods of instruction. They two constitute

the dialectical unity of Christian parents' parenting philosophy so that I presented it as "cross-shaped."

It is not unique, but has its counterpart in the work of several scholars: Gutek (2005) points out that he finds meaning and value in two very different philosophies (Maritain's and Dewey's) of education, and Kim (2012) argues that Maritain's epistemological approach has an important influence on Christian education but Dewey's contribution affects far more diverse ways including the Teaching for Understanding Framework and practical theology. As children grow up, parents' non-faith education philosophy is not static, but constantly adjusts upon reflection. This period of time can be regarded as a stage for parents (teachers) of knowledge accumulation and educational idea formation. As part of a generation of educational innovation, they first learned in the "situation," and parented their children in the "situation." This is consistent with the study of Christian educators as Kwon (2011) points out, "In secular education, the practical side of the learning process is emphasized as the experiential phase of becoming familiar with the subject matter...Christian education shares this trait with the secular world." As a result, Christian families accommodated what the secular culture had to offer by expanding their frame of reference to make themselves relevant in a secular environment in the short-and-long-term.

**Figure 3:** Cross-Shaped Parenting Philosophy



## **5.3 The Role and Influence of Other Family Members**

### ***5.3.1 Fathers' Role in the Children's Religious Rearing.***

#### ***5.3.1.1 Non-believer Fathers (Esther and Ruth)***

Esther, a 70 Hou, has been a Christian for five years, and her husband is a university teacher. Ruth is a generation 80 Hou, and she has been a Christian for almost 1.5 years. Her husband is a senior leader of a state-owned enterprise. Their husbands are not Christians, but have significantly different attitudes toward Christianity. Esther's husband thinks it is good to have faith, and believes that the Bible is the truth, so he has a mild attitude regards to his wife's religious education towards

their son. "I have not paid much attention to children's religious education. Our child sometimes reads the Bible, but seldom reads other Christian books. I think the Bible is absolutely true but you must understand it in a correct way." Ruth's husband thinks Christianity is superstition and Christians have been brainwashed. He thought she has gone too far. As the child gradually grows, physiologically, the opposing attitude of Ruth's husband was getting stronger.

One day, my husband saw our son with his palms together and eyes closed just before the meal table. He got really angry and yelled to me, "Are you the one teaching our son this stuff? Why do you teach him this? Why not something good?"...And, not long ago, I suggested that our son should be sent to a Christian kindergarten. He responded, "You must be mad! Will you want to do harm to our son?" (Ruth)

In specific approaches, the husband and wife also showed different concepts of education. The wife appeared to fall into a dilemma and confusion. Consequently, subjective negotiations must take place to make oppositional identities.

When my child fights with other children for toys, my husband teaches him to act with violence against violence. I want my husband to teach my child to be friendlier, but he does not want my child to be bullied by others. I think I need to consult some Christian teachers about how to solve this problem. I believe that Christian and secular methods could be integrated to some extent rather than being mutually exclusive. I am also very confused about how to mediate between these viewpoints. I believe I could find the answer in the Bible. However, I cannot understand the words in the Bible so thoroughly, so I hope I can find some reference books which are easy and clear to understand. (Ruth)

The above differences made Esther's religious educational activities relatively free, while Ruth's is restricted and mostly hidden in many ways. In the interview, I found that even in Esther's home, her religious education was not a plain sailing; sometimes it was swayed. The husband was occasionally concerned that their child was too young to live a life of religion and faith. So there was a phase when Esther took the child to attend Sunday school or fellowship and her husband would stop it or even make angry protests. When a wife proposed "men should leave their parents and unite with their wives," husbands who are used to being close with their parents do not understand this fact. Both marriage bonds and the intergenerational relationship highlight family tension (Yang, 1994; Heng, 2007). This kind of family education has stable and intermittent characteristics, because it is susceptible to interference, and not very persistent.

Generally, for such families, if one side doesn't believe in Christianity nor repel it or even have affection for it, he or she will generally cooperate with the other side's religious education, resulting in a smooth teaching of faith and Christian values to the child. On the contrary, if one side does not believe in Christianity and repels it, it creates obstacles for faith education, and can even cause conflicts because of the parents' differing educational views. Early education success then depends largely on the pious degree of the one side who believes in God and Christianity. Of course, if one of the parents believes in Christianity, this plays a positive role in marriage bonds, or if a child shows positive results in the process of accepting religion, it may affect the action of the other parent, thereby reducing resistance.

#### *5.3.1.2 Fathers with Faith (Alice, Grace, Hannah).*

Alice and Grace have family altar,<sup>81</sup> which means a Christian fellowship at home, but there is no fellowship at Hannah's home on

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<sup>81</sup> Narrowly, family altar means in a Christian family, parents and children practice religious activities together at home. In this research, from the family

account of having non-believer parents-in-law who live with them. Even though both Alice and Grace offered belief guidance for their children through family fellowships, there are some differences between them. The members of Alice's fellowship only include her, her child and her husband while the members of Grace's fellowship include more people, such as her neighbors, relatives, and friends. Around dozens of people attend her fellowship every time; most of whom are couples. In addition, Alice's fellowship is held more frequently in casual and free styles, almost once every day while Grace's fellowship is held once a week, with an organized and relatively official style. Grace's husband got converted to Christianity earlier than anyone in this interview and now he organizes a fellowship at his home. When I asked him about his wife's family education for their child, he responded proudly, "She has brought a lot of Christian books for our child. She is a good wife and mother, with love and patience. She never complains. Being educated by her, our child must be very excellent." Alice's husband has been a Christian since after they got married and instead of actively leading the fellowship, he supported his wife's religious education.

As for Hannah's husband, he thinks that at present, the family education should mainly depend on his wife. When the child grows older, he will get involved as well. When asked to commend his wife's religious education, he said, "My wife often reads the Bible for her at home and teaches her Christian values. The atmosphere of our home is spiritual." However, when I was in the field observing his family, I hardly saw a striking Christian layout. For this reason, I asked him, "I don't see any cross hanging at your home. Why?" Hannah's husband's answer is as follows: "Because my parents are not believers. If I hang a cross at home, I'm afraid they may be disgusted with our religion.

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education perspective, I define it as children's religious education acquired from their parents through reading the Bible, singing hymns, prayers or attending Bible study.



Afterwards, I have confirmed this further through Hannah.” Thus, I feel that when Christians live with non-Christians, especially when non-Christians are elders, Christians’ religious activities may be limited to some extent. Overall, although the husband and wife are not completely consistent with each other, there is no fundamental conflict and contradiction.

### ***5.3.2 The Influence of the Grandparents***

*“A man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife” (Genesis 2: 24).*

That is to say, the Bible emphasizes that the new family comprised a husband and a wife is more significant than the original families of the couple. Therefore, the boundary between the original family and the nuclear family should be clear among Christians. Nevertheless, in China, there is no clear boundary between a nuclear family and its original ones, especially after the birth of grandchildren (Wang, 2006; Zhou, 2010). Meanwhile, grandparents take the initiative to interfere with the nuclear family and take good care of the babies. Chinese families have a remarkable feature in that the development of nuclear families is associated with that of the whole family (Chen, 2011:17). The most extreme case is the phenomenon of the left-behind children<sup>82</sup>; these children are usually raised by their grandparents. Compared to other countries, the extent of Chinese grandparents’ child education (upbringing) participation is the highest.<sup>83</sup> The extended childrearing is meaningful to grandparents in the Chinese contextualization.

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<sup>82</sup> They do not live together with their parents, actually in a "parent’s education vacuum."

<sup>83</sup> The survey found that the current generation of young parents is with the phenomenon that "only born without parenting." When new children are born, their grandparents have become the main force of raising and teaching. For many children’ food, clothing and other activities have been taken care of by their grandparents. In addition, many young parents simply send their children to

Young couples' economic capacity or the need for grandparents is the decisive factor and the objective reason for grandparents being involved in parenting levels. In consideration of taking care of their children, some mothers may temporarily stop working for some time only to find it very difficult when they go back to work because of their limited ability. A Church priest told me,

In my opinion, in today's family, parents should bring up their own children by themselves without help from the children's grandparents. But I find that they really can't do that. I came to understand their experience because our country's situation makes it necessary for them to get old people's help. The economic factor is the biggest reason. The husband or wife's income alone cannot support the whole family. Grandparents became believers at an old age with very little knowledge about children; especially educating 0 to 3 years old.

Accordingly, many mothers have to return to their workplace as soon as they give birth to their child. There is a relatively long holiday for mothers who work in a public institution but only about six months off at most are given to a mother who had a caesarean section. By that time, the child is only half a year old. For these mothers, early education is the elders' duty. But for the elders, their focus is more on "parenting," which means to make the children have enough to eat and warm clothes to wear, rarely involving the spiritual education aspect.

Consequently, with the family relation's transformation caused by childbearing, the two-person world has changed into three generations

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their grandparents' home (or maternal grandparents') with one visit every weekend. At present, in the some community, there has formed a considerable scale "grandparents-children circle": grandparents play with their grandchildren and it's rare to see the figure of the young parents. The meaning of parents mentioned by Shanghai parents education community training institutions explicitly includes grandparents and even nannies.

under one roof. Judging from the observations, the effects of elders' participation can be divided into positive and negative categories.

#### *5.3.2.1 Positive Experience*

Speaking of specific child-care in Grace's family while serving in a religious community, her mother has played a vital role. Hannah's mother also helped her take care of the child when she was busy dealing with the church work. Even her mother-in-law, a non-believer, has no objection with regards to Christianity in order for Hannah to face less interference and obstacles in the process of co-parenting. If the husband does not believe in God but the grandparents have a religious tendency, the wife suffers less. Ruth's mother-in-law, who has a Christian orientation virtually became an assisted force.

#### *5.3.2.2 Negative Experience*

On the other hand, the presence of grandparents in a nuclear family affects relationships; tiny changes develop in the relationship between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law. Ruth, Esther and Hannah all claimed that they did not suffer conflicts before having children. After giving birth, a big turn happened. Esther had disputes with the elders in terms of the child's diet. There seemed to be no concept of special meals for children among the elders. Northern elders prefer salty, greasy, and single meals, while mothers with scientific consciousness prefer delicate and diversified meals that are specially prepared for their children. In this way, contradictions between the two generations are unavoidable. Esther recalls cooking with an empty stomach and looking forward to having breakfast after 2 p.m. while the rest of the family talks cheerfully and humorously with the children. Grace had an argument with her mother in selecting a kindergarten. Grandmothers give priority to achieving high grades with the hopes that they could later attend prestigious universities. They lived during a period when people pursued education and so they believe that successful school work equals success

in life. They tended to seek a sense of security in prestigious universities and labor insurance. Under the influence of the Cultural Revolution, they became doubters of political security and prefer to veil their personal faith. Hannah held the view that the elders do not really understand mothers' hardships. It always lingered around their mouths that they did not suffer so much when they have quite a few children at that time. The elders considered early education an act of wasting money. In Ruth's opinion, too much spoil deprived the consistency of educating children. For example, she asked her child to have dinner on time and stop watching television. It annoyed Ruth much that her mother and mother-in-law allowed her child not to have meals regularly and instead have snacks as a replacement. Alice did not suffer this since there is no interference from the elders in her family. The divergence between two generations reached its summit when choosing a kindergarten for children at the age of 3. Esther's mother-in-law and Grace's mother-in-law can fall under this category. One is a party member and the other is a Christian. Although their religious standpoint and educational background are different, their attitudes were consistent that they should not send their children to a Christian kindergarten. When they came to know that the children were planned to be sent to a Christian kindergarten, Esther's parents-in-law and Grace's mother (a Christian) all opposed the idea.

I don't think it is good to let my grandson know something about God since he is still too young. I think it is better for him to decide his own religion when he grows older. (Esther's mother-in-law)

I don't oppose that my granddaughter becomes a Christian. But I don't agree that they send him to a Christian kindergarten since the educational style of this kindergarten is not able to make him enter famous universities in the future. (Grace's mother-in-law)

The grandparents' actual effect on childrearing has a close relationship with their educational status, and a consistent degree of belief with their parents. In those joint families, before children attend kindergarten, there is no conflict about religion among family members. But when the children are old enough to go to a kindergarten, non-Christian family members may oppose mothers' religious education since they are not sure whether little children should know something about religion or not. At the same time, they are concerned about the quality of the education in Christian kindergartens. The study also found that the intervention of grandparents makes it very difficult to keep rules consistent in family education. For example, grandparents, when taking care of the child, do not see the problem as mothers do; therefore, they disregard the code and break the consistency of the educational pattern.

## **SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Summary of Results**

The preceding chapters have traversed through the early parenting experiences and elaborated the educational philosophy of the five Chinese Christian mothers. The detailed result of the research is summarized as follows: Chapter one states the problem, explains the argument, contextualizes the study, presents its significance, and operationally defines keywords used in this study. In chapter two, the transformation of early childhood education in Socialist China was first argued; accordingly, supportive theories of early religious parenting and Mutually Adapting were articulated. In following I presented a theoretical assumption which manifested the educational philosophy of CCF named “Dual Educational Theory of Perennialism and Constructivism.” The third chapter introduced the research methodology of multiple-narrative case study as well as how the respondents were selected and how the data was collected and analyzed. The fourth chapter presented the results of research. Specifically, first, Christian mothers’ upbringing and education background was explored one by one based on the individual contextualization. Second, mothers’ childrearing practice within and outside the home as well as philosophy was elaborated. Christian communities, including family and church

fellowships, appeared to be Christian mothers' active social network. However, due to some objective reasons it stopped: church distance, the size of the Sunday school classroom and the high population of children attending it hindered them to bring their children to church. They also believed a Bible-based preschool setting could provide a protective environment that reinforced moral values and guard their devout way of life so as to keep a continuity of religion. However, Bible-based preschools have to submit to the rule of the Chinese government, otherwise they will be outlawed. A process of socialization within and outside the home is continuously conducted conveying a dual cultural orientation of "Sinicization" and "Christianization." On faith and character parenting, mothers' displayed both Perennialistic and Constructivist tendencies while on Confucianism and globalization parenting, mothers mainly employed Constructivist learning theory. Third, fathers' and grandparents' role and influence were explored in positive and negative aspect. In the last chapter, the besides the summary of the results, the discuss of the cultural trends of CCF's parenting was first developed; Then the conclusions of the study were stated one by one responding to the four research questions (two major questions but each bring two minor questions) presented beforehand. During the research, I listened carefully to the mothers' insights on the major events they have been through. On the foundation of these true stories, I reconstructed the internal and external world of the characters including the past and future of the stories. Through the research involved in their educational background, their reconstruction of themselves during parenting activities, and the interrelations between them and the external environment, I co-experienced their spiritual journeys and educational gains. I was able to understand how influential their experiences are to their future life.

Overall, this study found that although the education of Chinese Christian families was implemented within the secular extended family

and weaved in the secular daily life, the internal dynamics are governed by an embedded religious context, from which children were raised especially in faith and moral education. Also, this study verified the consistency of Christianity and Chinese society in early childhood education. Christian values and Chinese culture go hand in hand in affecting early parenting.

## **6.2 Discussion**

As shown in the following figure, “Chinese Culture” could be divided into three kinds of cultural ideology: Confucianism, Globalization and Communism. Undeniably Communist ideology “continues to enforce atheist propaganda through the education system, mass media, and numerous party and state organ[s].” (Yang, 2012) In primary and secondary schools, children are rendered ideological education known as “moral education,” which has abundant contents including preliminary Marxist theory, atheistic thoughts, spreading scientific and cultural knowledge, democracy and the rule of law, educating young children in many ideological and moral areas like patriotism, and collectivism and socialism education (Che & Ding & Xu, 2007; Li, 2009; Senger & Bocheński). This can be found from the legal provisions of the state.<sup>84</sup> As the national leading value, it has been a factor essentially impacting “Chinese culture” that should not be ignored. Nevertheless, the current Chinese Constitution (adopted in 1982) has granted “freedom of religious belief” and the “normal

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<sup>84</sup>“No one can use religion to interfere with public order, impair the health of citizens, hinder the activities of the national education system the Constitution (article 36) and Law on Regional Autonomy (article11) “Separating the system of education and religion. No organization or individual can make use of religion to interfere with the activities of the national education system.”



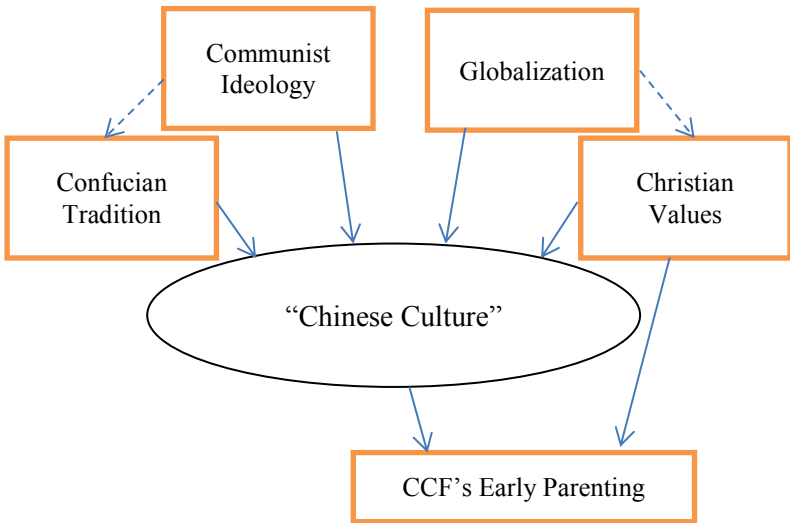
religious activities.”<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, compared to the cultural trends as such Confucian tradition and globalization, the impact of that on CCF’s early parenting, especially in the 0-3-year phase as I will discuss, is too weak to count. Therefore, the full line is to show the influence on “Chinese culture” while the dotted line is used to show the weakened influence on Confucian tradition. But in the category of Christian family’s early education, the factor of Communism will be left out of this account. On the other hand, although globalization directly influences “Chinese Culture,” its impact on Christian value could also be seen weakened. Accordingly, the former is embodied by the full line and the latter is in dotted line. I verified the Mutually Adapting Theory and the related point of views through the qualitative investigation.

According to my research, during childrearing, Christian mothers have not experienced distinctly the conflicts between Chinese culture represented by Confucianism and Christianity, or rather, Christian mothers have filtered traditional Confucianism and globalization through Christian values. As suggested by Yang (1999), the integration process of the two identities and value systems are selective and negotiable, but based solely on the absolute ground and superiority of Christianity. Because of the exclusive Christian belief, they hold a higher value for Christianity than Confucianism. When conflicts occur between the two worldviews, Christianity always remains superior and must be given uncompromising priority (Yang, 1999).

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<sup>85</sup> Article 36 reads as follows: "Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. No state organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion. The state protects normal religious activities. No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the state. Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination."

**Figure 4:** Cultural Trends Affecting CCF' Early Parenting



Generally, all the mothers emphasized the importance of the Christian faith associated with building a sound moral character, and showed the willingness to train to children to develop a biblical worldview. They believed that much of what the children learnt more derived from the nature of their experiences in the family setting rather from what they are taught. The training is a combination of tangible and intangible, more of which is intangible; they made use of various living situation and their own behaviors in the concrete practice to affect a child's view of value. Christian mothers deeply believed the Bible contains the best parenting wisdom and teaching while in real life, they fulfilled the principles of the Bible according to their specific situation. The parenting is as flexible but uncompromising of biblical principle.

Overall, the nonreligious education setting was open-climate, and the early parenting activities were not limited to time and place, rather they

were ubiquitous and concurrent; besides, there was no fixed standard of teaching or textbooks. The non-Christian content without obvious conflict with the biblical principle was also adopted. In terms of treating Confucian tradition and modern science, mothers' attitude appeared to be open. For Confucianism, traditional etiquette and sinology classics are two major components. Mothers think highly of the filial piety concept; respect for the elders and taking good care of the children. At this point, it seems that Christian education and Traditional Chinese Confucianism are not contradictory. However, several ideas are abandoned: the superiority of men over women, raising sons to provide for parents during old age and bringing glory to the ancestors. For modernization, there were no specific teaching content on natural science due to the young ages of the children. On the one hand, they pursued higher education and studied overseas; this generation of parents accepted higher education wherein scientific views, books, and experts' opinion are given preference whether in feeding or educating their children. On the other hand, they are concerned of the other extreme-where their children only get to study for the exam. Also of note, their parenting choices regarding early education were fulfilled in a Christianized process by explaining Confucian thoughts and scientific concepts in Christian words and biblical thoughts. Mothers born in the 1970s could accept Confucian classics more easily than mothers born in the 1980s since the former ones are more influenced by tradition. The fathers' situation was the same as the mothers'. Mothers and fathers born in the 1980s were more interested and depended more greatly in applying modern scientific knowledge. As for the conduct with extended families, Christian family emphasized the loyalty to God and the filial piety to parents at the same time. Mothers' general feeling is that "Childrearing is also motherhood-nurturing."

### **6.3 Conclusion**

In this section, two questions aforementioned were respectively responded as follows.

First, mothers' parenting philosophy has been greatly shaped and formed by their upbringing background and educational experience. The influence of the existential environment, specifically the social policy, on Christian families is remarkable. There is no doubt that social policy has influenced Chinese Christian families. The national social policy is an indicator of the mainstream social values of the country. The policy of the Chinese Cultural Revolution makes young students "Chairman Mao's little red guards," which reflects the rich political values; reform and opening policy makes the younger generation's values more diversified and personalized, even keeping up with the international pace. The influence of religious policy on Christianity is also obvious. In history, the prohibition of religious activities by the state has forced religious behaviors to be isolated from the church to the family, making the Christian family education in a comprehensive state of stagnation and decline. Because of religious policy reforms, the Christian family is thriving today. In the future, social policy will still be one of the most important factors that restrict CCF. Certainly in all the policies, the Family Planning Policy has the most direct impact on the size of the Christian family. Not long ago, this policy was again relaxed.<sup>86</sup> This is bound to bring new influence in the form of new pattern of China's Christian families in the future. In my interview, every Christian mother has expressed their desire to have one more child. Alice's husband is an overseas Chinese, so the couple is allowed to have two children. After having much hesitation because of her career, at last, Grace made a decision to have another child. Esther does not plan to have another

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<sup>86</sup> If one party of a couple is from one-child family, the couple is allowed to have a second child.

child because of her age and health status. Her mother-in-law does not support her having the second child because she is concerned that this will hinder the development of the first child. However, her husband still tries to persuade her. Hannah shares a similar experience with Esther. She cannot make a decision now because of her age and some financial reasons. But she has expressed that she would like to follow God's plan. Ruth has recently moved to another city with her husband and she is not prepared to have another child. But she will consider it in the future. Furthermore, social policies can even influence family concepts. In the interview, I have found that sometimes Christian mothers think the relationship between them and the children are more of a priority than their relationship with their husband, especially after the birth of their child. I think this has something to do with the entire family atmosphere under the One Child Policy.

Second, based on the proposition of the "Dual Educational Theory of Perennialism and Constructivism" that I presented beforehand, I further modified it into an educational mode named "Cross-shaped Parenting Philosophy" which aims to describe the education of CCF (see Graphic 4). The "Cross-Shaped Parenting Philosophy" pursuit filling up the loss of ethics and morals, and the confusion of the spiritual world for regular people, and provide invisible capital for the future growth of the children according to the current national conditions of China (Zhou, 2012; Zhang, 2010; Su, 2005; Lin, 2012) since the constructivists assert that any absolute truth, such as Christian virtue and morality is exclusive. As a result, educators need to be very careful never to push on their students any form of morality or absolutes, but only to create an environment in which children can determine their own set of moral truths (Ryan & Bohlin, 1999). This could be seen as the backlash of postmodernism. Compared with the secular families, Christian families have the advantage of clear education philosophy, educational objectives and materials.

According to Jean-Claude Guwellebaud (cf. Daban, Mary), people's religious identities in Asia, Africa, and Latin America have become increasingly complex and changing. Identity construction has become increasingly complicated with the rapid globalization of its different components including social, cultural, and religious aspects of identity (Hua, 2007, Li, 2007; Zhuo, 2000). Chinese Christians who hold double or dual identities as intellectuals deeply rooted in Chinese culture can at the same time be committed Christians. Chinese culture and Christianity are allowed to coexist in their tensions. In this sense, Christian education in Chinese families has some national colors. And the "good" education for them to their children is embodied both in religious aspect but also in Confucian morality. Again, they interpret the Christian education in the light of Chinese Confucius conditioning while the Confucian culture is filtered through Christianity. Thus, I think identifying Chinese Christians as "Chinese Confucius Christian" will be more appropriate.

Third, within home, Christian families are able to provide children with a conceptual structure that integrates the two inconsistent cultural themes. In this way, their value-system could be seen as one of the "Christian Chinese ethics." however, the confliction in school (preschool) setting did appear to be obvious especially in regular public schools. And as the children grow older, the contradiction in a complex reality will correspondingly be more salient. The art of parenting plays a decisive role in identity formation and construction of the children and at the same time, Christian communities such as Sunday school and family fellowship are available as supplementary power. Outside home, Christian mothers had to encounter the tensions between accepting education domestically or abroad and academic performance and character education when choosing Bible-based preschools. The non-mainstream Christian education is in a marginalized status, has deficient educational resources, and has no advantage compared to the general

society. This has something to do with the inherent deficiency of the cultural fraction due to the destruction of Christian education in modern history, and the political guidance of the modern government to be sensitive to religions. The Christian family education has no established system yet, and no example to follow, thus it is still in the process of exploration. Under such circumstances, Christian organizations manifested spontaneous strength in search of assistance and solutions. Though parents hold different attitudes towards Sunday schools and Bible-based preschools, they are still beneficial references for and supplements to the Christian family education.

Fourth, for Christian fathers, reflecting on the faith and character education, they generally appeared to be supportive and cooperated with the mothers' childrearing. In that the non-Christian fathers, were neutral or hostile to the mothers' faith education, they might create obstacles or even cause conflicts for faith education because of their different world views. Nevertheless, their attitudes might turn to being active depending on their affection for Christianity, the marital relationship and the children's reaction. The role of grandparents for Christian family's childrearing was a double-edged sword. In terms of reducing the life stress of younger family, the involvement of grandparents were regarded as positive while in terms of faith and character education, they unintentionally interfere with the mothers' process of plan. Moreover, they appeared to be old-fashioned in terms of modern scientific childrearing. Hence, the presence of grand-parenting might cause confliction in younger families. Of note, Chinese Christian Family manifested the trend of spouse-centered family ethics compared to the general Chinese families which are regarded as child-centered.

To the outsider, there may be little difference at first glance in the early parenting patterns between Christian families and regular non-Christian ones. However, the conspicuous marker of difference was the peculiar atmosphere functioned by their characteristic educational

dimensionality of perennialism which Chinese general families do not possess. Consequently, their parenting attitudes and behavior were inevitably manifested as different in short and long time. Hopefully, Christian family's parenting philosophy, especially the concept about character education will provide a useful reference for Chinese-culture-based education and even have some positive impact.

## **6.4 Limitations and Recommendations**

Like all research, this study has some limitations. However, the recommendation for professionals and scholars will be manifested as follows based on the educational implications from Chinese Christian mothers.

First, this study is limited by the children's age from 0 to 3 years, while different physical and mental need in the different age group would give mothers different parenting experiences. I hope to continue the research to analyze and explain according to the age phase, such as 3 to 6 years, elementary school and high school. I hope to do the comparative analysis in different age group, which will achieve more meaningful results.

Second, this research is limited to a family research, and is not deep enough to cover other Christianized educational areas, such as the Christianized schools and the Sunday schools in the church which future studies could focus on. School and social education are not mentioned very much either.

Third, this study has mentioned only a little about the cultural factors of China's popular atheism and some related aspects. Actually, children of most Christian families go to public schools for education and the education on the ideology of atheism, patriotism, collectivism, and socialism has great influence on the children. Hopefully, future research could make up the insufficiency of this factor.



Fourth, this study has not systematically involved family education in the countryside. I merely learned a little about this field when talking with some of my friends in the churches. For example, there are very few kindergartens and early educational institutions in the countryside and their educational quality is low. Besides, children are often raised in big families and sometimes a child may be raised with other children from his/her relatives. Therefore, the mission of family education is greater and the requirements for educating children are stricter in the countryside than in the cities.

Fifth, this study focuses mainly on urban white-collar workers, who have a good educational background and jobs. If blue-collar workers are involved, the result may be different.

Last but not the least, I put forward the practical solution to the actual parenting activities for Christian mothers. As for fellowships in the church, they can periodically or irregularly hold educational lectures to improve the awareness of family education. They can also organize seminars to encourage the parents to communicate experiences, and open parenting classes to teach parenting philosophy. They can also organize visitations to the homes, do the mediation, and help people's lives. Moreover, I could use the resources and platform of the internet. As for social policies, the maternity leave can be extended and the living compensation could be given to full-time mothers to reduce their living pressure, and relieve the conflicts between the two generations. It is my hope that in the future policies will start to emphasize this area. According to the research, the conflicts in the family are mostly caused by two generations including grandparents, but seldom caused by problems between the couples.

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## APPENDIXES

### Appendix 1

#### *Outline of Interview Questions to the Families*

Family members involved in childcare for children between the age of 0-3:

1. Parents, 2. Grandparents, 3. Grandparents,

Look at the chart of “Division of early childrearing,” select the options that you are charged (were charged) in.

Categories	subcategories	Content	Remarks
Physical nurture (Daily diet)	Housework	Housework to clean the room, clean slate, cooking, grocery shopping and other support	normal operation of Family Affairs
	Childcare	Develop child care schedules Meal (decision), feeding (milk), give the child a bath, sun (outdoor activities), to teach (band) on the toilet, coax sleep, vaccination, disease care, baby	focus on safety and physical health



		clothing and supplies procurement	
Intellectual nurture (Knowledge transfer)	Teaching by books	By selecting books category, directly to the children read poetry, songs, Three Character Classic, English, mathematics, stories, art classes and other books, teaching aids, etc. purchasing books	focused cognitive, sensory integration, logic, language and other capacity development
	Teaching by daily life	By watching cartoons, playing music and singing, painting, playing games, swimming, playing with toys, go naughty fort, picnic (close to nature) and other modalities	
Spiritual nurture (Character faith)	Character	<b>Brave and strong character guide for children, care for the young, polite, honest and trustworthy, not prone to temper tantrums and other emotional outbursts</b>	<b>intelligence development focus</b>
	Belief	<b>By Faith Fellowship, Sunday School, worship, listen to praise, Bible reading, prayer and other</b>	<b>spiritual life lay foundation</b>

Learning parenting knowledge

The main study of people	learning pathways	the most influential
	Network query, reading, communication with those around her mother, from grandparents to obtain, practice accumulation, lectures, etc.	

Participate in early childhood institutions (fill in the blank)

Whether participate in early childhood institution?	Whose decision?	Who accompanies the child?	Whether feel the economic pressure?	How do you feel the effect?

**Only for grandparents:**

How did your generation raise the 0-3-year-old children?  
 Why do you help your children to raise their children?  
 What is your understanding of the work division of a couple in their family?  
 What are your expectations for your grandchildren's future?  
 What are your views on early education?

**For all non-believers:**

What's your understanding of Christianity and Christians?  
 How do you see the Christian mother (in your family) raise and educate her child? Did you see any religious factors?  
 Are there any conflicting experiences between you and the mother?  
 Examples.  
 What is your understanding of objectives and priorities for early education  
 How do feel about having a second child?

**For all believers (including mothers) :**

How did you become a Christian? For how long?  
 What's your current belief state? Will you take the initiative to say that you are a Christian?  
 Your understanding of Christian education, Christian family and Christian mother.  
 Any differences between believing family and the non-believing family?  
 Are there any conflicting experiences between you and other family member when you give a Christian education? Examples.  
 Do you participate at Sunday School or the parent's community?  
 How do you see the role of Christianity in the child's future growth?  
 What do you see as the merits and negative aspects of traditional education and modern education?

**For (Christian) Mothers:**

***Mother's basic information:***

Age: Hometown: Education: Occupation: Income: When baptized: Who else lives with: Husband Occupation: Age: Belief:

***On Biblical Values***

- (1) What do you think of motherhood and fatherhood based on the biblical description?
- (2) How do you understand the verses that "Sons (children) are a heritage from the Lord (Pslm127:3)" and "A man will go away from his father and his mother and be joined to his wife (Genesis 2:24)."?
- (3) Give a ranking of husband, child, yourself and your belief.
- (4) Are there any stories that well illustrate how Christianity (church) influenced your parental values?
- (5) Do you have any conflicting experiences between other family members and you on childrearing?
- (6) Your understanding of Christian motherhood, Christian family and Christian education.
- (7) What role do you think belief play on your child's future life?
- (8) What do you see as both the merits and negative aspects of on traditional education and modern education?
- (9) What are your challenges on the way toward a Christian education?

***On Marital relationship:***

- (1) How long did it take to have the child after marriage? Did you have an expectation about the gender of the baby?
- (2) Has your marital relationship been effected after you had a baby?
- (3) Are your parenting decisions mutually agreed upon? If not, how did you resolve the conflicts?
- (4) How do you see the role of a wife?
- (5) Are there plans to have a second child?

***On Parent-child relationship:***

- (1) What will you say if asked to self-evaluate your early parenting?
- (2) Describe one day of your first three years in each period. How did you keep the balance between work and childrearing?
- (3) What concerned you most in your early education? What is your ideal parenting way?
- (4) How do you see the role of motherhood and fatherhood? How did

the father perform in reality?

(5) What is (was) your standard to send your child to a kindergarten?

(6) Do you have any plans regarding the child's future learning and growth?

***Intergenerational relations:***

(1) What is the relationship between your parents (original family and spouse's family) and you? Was there any change after you had the child?

(2) Are there any conflicts between your parents and you in the early period? For what reason?

(3) Was there any impact on you from your parents of their educating way?

## **Appendix 2**

***Questions for Interviewing the Principals of Sunday Schools:***

Q: The basic information about your Sunday school?

Q: Do you have any overall plan for your Sunday school?

Q: Have students under 3 years old been positioned in your Sunday school?

Q: Do you have any appropriate textbook?

Q: Do parents take part in organizing parents' meetings?

Q: Please evaluate the situation of Christian family education generally.

Q: Are there many senior citizens attending parents' meeting?

Q: How do you combine the biblical teaching of leaving parents and being united to his wife with the national conditions of China?

Q: Do you agree with the opinion that the old generation getting involved in children's education is the most important characteristic of the localization of education in China?

Q: What is the attitude of your church?

Q: It seems that parents have to exchange information about children's education with churches only through Sunday schools. Do you agree with this viewpoint?

Q: How do you define the Christian family education in China?

Q: With respect to the churches, how do you educate "the Faith Second Generation"?

Q: What do you think of the "Consecrated Education"? For example, churches setting up kindergartens by themselves?

Q: Are these two systems not able to be compatible with each other?

Q: What do you think of the future of the Christian education in China?

## Appendix 3

### *Participant Consent of Study (for Mothers)*

### (研究参与同意书)

Researcher: Yan Jun, Ed. D. of Yonsei University, South Korea

Cellphone:135-0493-2557 Email: [seoulsoophie@gmail.com](mailto:seoulsoophie@gmail.com),

This research aims to, through some mothers' personal dictation, unfold their experiences of raising and educating children between 0 to 3 years old as well as what these experiences mean for them and how these experiences influence them. Five one-to-one interviews and one group interview are planned as part of this research. Each interview will last for about one and one half hour and will be recorded for later analysis and research. In order to protect the privacy of the participators, alias names will be used. I promise that I will keep all the materials, such as diaries about raising children and photos which are collected during my research properly and use them only for research. In the research process, if participators have any question or suggestion, they can contact me at any time and I will respond actively.

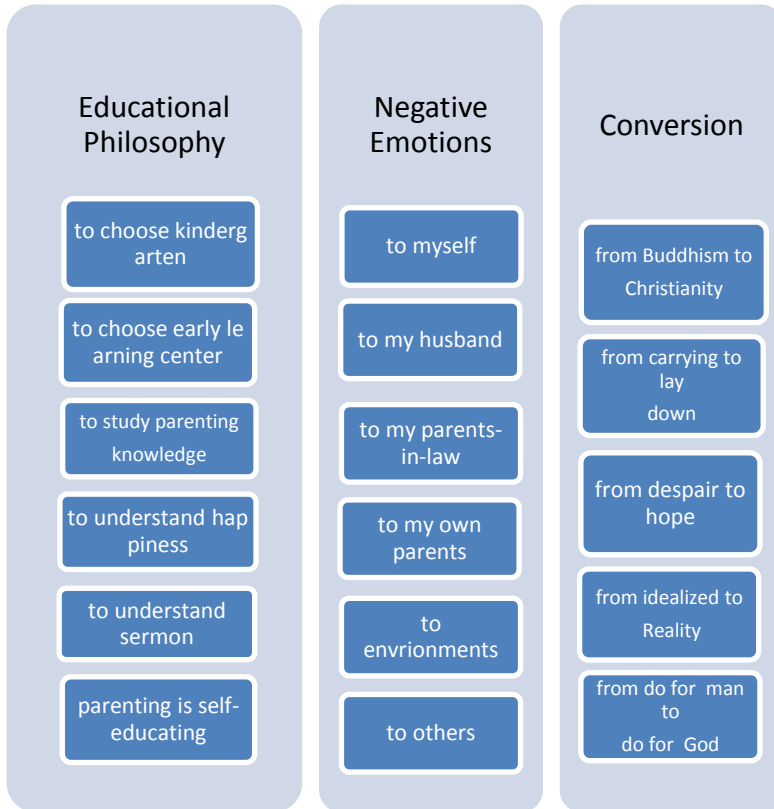
Since I'm also a mother who has a little kid, I can completely understand everything about raising and educating children. I wish by this research to can help mothers (including mothers-to-be) do a better job in educating children from 0 to 3 years of age and thus make more children grow healthily and happily.

The participator has read all the words above. She agrees to participate in this research.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Participator: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 4

### *Thematic Map: Three Main Themes of Esther*



## 국문 요약

### 본토 문화 맥락 하의 중국 기독교 가정에서의 육아 경험에 대한 연구

최근 중국 1970-80 년대 태생의 젊은 기독교 신자가 늘어남에 따라, 기독교 가정에서의 조기 교육이 학술적인 주제로 주목을 받고 있다. 본 연구는 사회-문화적 맥락 속에서 중국 기독교 가정의 자녀양육 경험의 의미를 해석하는 데에 목적을 두고 있다. 연구자는 어머니들의 대변인으로서가 아니라, 연구 참여자의 현실을 전달하는 마음으로 출발하였다. 따라서 본 연구는 중국 기독교 가정 어머니들의 일상 육아 경험에 대한 교육 철학이 무엇이며 이 교육 철학이 그들의 육아 활동을 어떻게 영향을 미쳤는지를 탐색하는 데 그 목적이 있다. 중국 동북의 중심 도시에 거주하는 다섯 명의 기독교 가정 어머니들의 육아 경험은 본 사례 연구의 핵심 자료로 사용되었다. 일년 이상 되는 기간 동안 다섯 명의 연구참여자와 그들이 속한 가정 구성원에 대한 참여관찰을 진행했으며, 심층(in-depth)-개방식(open-ended) 인터뷰를 중심으로 한 질적 연구 방법을 통해 자료 수집하였다. 본 연구는 중국 기독교 가정의 육아경험에 관한



선행 연구가 거의 없기 때문에, 그들의 양육 경험을 다루는 지식이 의미가 있을 것이며, 중국 기독교 가정의 교육 철학을 이론화 하는 데 기여할 것이다.

결과적으로 중국 기독교 가정에서의 종교 교육은 세속적 일상생활에 젖어들어 대가족 단위로 이루어지고 있다는 것을 발견하였다. 본 연구의 결론은 다음과 같이 정리된다.

첫째, 기독교 신자 어머니들의 교육철학은 “향존주의와 구성주의의 이중 교육 이론(Dual Educational Theory of Perennialism and Constructivism),”로 추출할 수 있는데, 이를 바탕으로 “십자-모양의 양육 철학(cross-shaped parenting philosophy)”라는 명명한 것은 양자의 변증법적의 관계를 보다 뚜렷하게 설명할 수 있기 때문이다. 뿐만 아니라 가정 내외의 사회화 과정은 지속적으로 “중국화 (Sinicization)” 와 “기독교화(Christianization)”의 이중적 지향을 전달한다.

둘째, 기독교 가정 어머니들이 성서적 자녀양육(Biblical parenting)을 지향하고 있음에도 불구하고, 개인 상황에 맞게 교육을 이루어졌다. 가정교육 외에 그들은 일반 조기교육 기관, 기독교 공동체, 성서적 유치원(Bible-based preschool) 등의 교육활동도 받아들였다. 그리고 전반적으로 비종교적 가정 교육에도 분위기가 개방적이었다.

셋째, 기독교가정 아버지들은 일반가정 아버지들에 비해 상대적으로 자녀들에게 지원하고 협력하는 역할이 컸다. 일반가정 아버지들은 어머니의 신앙 교육을 실천하는 데에 지장과 충돌이 일으키기도 했다. 그리고 조부모들은 기독교 가정의 육아 활동에 적극적인 면과 소극적인 면이 모두 나타난다는 것이 발견되었다.

**핵심어:** 중국 기독교 가정, 가정 교육, 인격 교육, 도덕 교육, 기독교, 조기 육아, 사례 연구, 육아, 기독교 교육, 본토 문화, 중국 교회, 향존주의, 구성주의, 중국화, 기독교화, 성서적 학교



Globethics.net is a worldwide ethics network based in Geneva, with an international Board of Foundation of eminent persons, 130,000 participants from 200 countries and regional and national programmes. Globethics.net provides services especially for people in Africa, Asia and Latin-America in order to contribute to more equal access to knowledge resources in the field of applied ethics and to make the voices from the Global South more visible and audible in the global discourse. It provides an electronic platform for dialogue, reflection and action. Its central instrument is the internet site [www.globethics.net](http://www.globethics.net).

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The Editor of the different Series of Globethics.net Publications is Prof. Dr. Christoph Stückelberger, Founder and Executive Director of Globethics.net in Geneva and Professor of Ethics at the University of Basel/Switzerland.

Contact for manuscripts and suggestions: [stueckelberger@globethics.net](mailto:stueckelberger@globethics.net).

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## Local Culture and Early Parenting in China

A Case Study on Chinese Mothers' Childrearing experiences



### Jun Yan

is a multicultural educationalist and linguist being proficient in Chinese, English, Korean and French. She is a teacher at the College of International Education, Shenyang Normal University, China. She is also the founder of the Organization of Sling-culture Development, a counselor of Global Hope English School and member of the Korean Society for the Study of Anthropology of Education. She studied at Yanbian University in China, and later defended her doctoral dissertation at the prestigious Yonsei University in Korea. Her recent research field is character education and Chinese Christian Family.

With the increase of Chinese Christians born in the “post-70s” and “post-80s” generations, the issue of early childhood education in Christian families deserves attention from an academic standpoint in these days. This study aims to interpret the meaning of Christian families’ childrearing experiences within the social and cultural contexts of China. It explores the educational philosophy of Chinese Christian families and examines how it influenced their childrearing activities through the detailed descriptions of Chinese Christian mothers’ childrearing experiences. Christian fathers are more involved in education than non-Christian. The parents act with the dual cultural orientation of “Sincization” and “Christianization”.