Familial Conversion: A Case Study on the Ethical-Religious Role of the Household in the Mass Conversion of Wenzhou Christians

Jieke ZHANG

(Divinity School of Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong))

Abstract: This article explores the familial conversion which has cumulative impact on the mass conversion of Wenzhou Christians after 1949. Acknowledging the dramatic revival of Christianity in Wenzhou following reform and opening in China by no means precludes recognizing the hidden upsurge of conversion events before 1978. Through a case study on the congregation of Qingpu Church in Heyang area of Wenzhou, I hope to demonstrate that the familial aspect of conversion in the form of household units, rather than individual conversions, is the key to understanding the conversion of Wenzhou Christians. The article argues that the oneness of family derived from the emotional and responsible relationships within it, along with the process of the conversion ritual, constitute the ethical-religious role of the household, which contributes to the emergence of familial conversion. This preliminary study attempts to draw more attention to family, an essential ethical and even existential cultural factor in Chinese society. It is through the family that we may come to better understand the indigenous development of Christianity in China.

Key Words: familial conversion; mass conversion; Christian family; Conversion Ritual; Iconoclasm

Author: ZHANG Jieke, Master of Divinity, Divinity School of Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong. Tel: +8613588448728; email: hmugu2005@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Since the 1980s, the massive conversion of Chinese to Protestant Christianity has sparked considerable interest. The so-called "Christianity Fever" has tended to be understood as a phenomenon unique to the period after the initiation of economic reform and the opening-up of China. Wenzhou Christianity has come to our attention through its significant bearing on the Christian revival precisely in this particular epoch with large political-economic changes[1].

[1] Alan Hunter and Kim-Kwong Chan, Protestantism in Contemporary China, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 2, 8, 67, 274; David Aikman, Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power, (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2006), 170-192. See also Xiao Zhitian, "Gaige, kaifang yu zongjiao wenti—Wenzhou jianwen de sikao" [Reform, Opening and the Problem of Religion: Information from Wenzhou], Zongjiao [Religion], no. 2, (1987), 1-6. Cao Nanlai also observes the development of Wenzhou Christianity as an urban phenomenon in the context of the renewed political-economic modernity. See Cao Nanlai, Constructing China's Jerusalem, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010). For Wenzhou Business Christians' cultural roots in rural Christianity and the popular religions in China, see Chen Jinhan, Jianshe Zhongguo Yelusaleng de xiandai shanggu [The Modern Merchants Constructing China's Jerusalem], (Hong Kong: Bachelor Thesis in the Divinity School of Chung-Chi College in the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2017).

However,the recognized resurgence of Christianity in Wenzhou by no means precludes recognizing the hidden upsurge of conversion motivations and practices which also occurred before the late 1970s. The rapid increase of Christians in Wenzhou between 1949 and 1978 is also apparent and[2], along with development after 1978, represents a movement of mass conversion which was unprecedented in the eighty-year history of missionary activity in Wenzhou prior to 1949[3].

There have been a number of studies on Wenzhou Christianity, but they never thoughtfully recount how mass conversion could be possible. However,studies on conversion phenomena in other regions of China have suggested several noteworthy explanations. Some have regarded the religious freedom policy and the relaxation of the political environment as generating the Christian revival in China. It is tempting to locate the resurrection of religion within the structural and political framework,as clearing the way for individual tendencies toward conversion[4]. Still,this explanation focuses only on macroscopic external conditions, while ignoring the fact that mass conversion consisted of numerous individual conversion events,each playing an essential and cumulative role.

In contrast,many researchers have noted the significance of the micro-level conversion process. The following are two accessible explanations from the micro perspective. First, plenty of regional studies of Christianity in China have explicitly focused on the impact of illnesses and misfortunes on the spread of

〔2〕 According to the city records of Wenzhou,in 1949 the number of Christians was 83000,which accounted for 41.5% of all Christians in Zhejiang Province. In 2007,the number rose significantly to 860000,which did not include believers from the congregations of the True Jesus Church and uncounted believers from various house churches. Today we lack accurate data on the number at the end of the Cultural Revolution. However,based on materials in a local church history in Ruian of Wenzhou,the years between 1949 and 1978 experienced a rapid increase of Christians from 9370 to 44125. If we calculate loosely in proportion,then in 1978,the number of believers in Wenzhou as a whole was about 390,000. Therefore,from 1949 to 1978,Wenzhou Christians grew by more than 300,000,and by 470,000 more from the end of the Cultural Revolution to 2007. For concrete records of number of Wenzhou Christians,see Fuk-tsang Ying,"Zhongguo jidujiao de quyu fazhan:1918,1949,2004" [The Regional Development of Protestant Christianity in China:1918,1949 and 2004], Hanyu jidujiao xueshu lunping [Sino-Christian Studies], No. 3,(2007),172; Zhang Zhongcheng,"Cong wenzhoujiaohui de muquxianxiang kan jiaohui de muyangguanli" [A Study on the Pastoral Management of Church Mirrored in the Phenomenon of Pastoral District in Wenzhou], Jinling shenxuezhi [Nanking Theological Review], no. 1,(2011),58; Ruianxian jiaohuishi (Neibuziliao) [The Church History of Ruian County (Internal document)],11-20;Cao Nanlai,Constructing China's Jerusalem,1. Additionally,the fact that the rapid increase of numbers of Christians in Wenzhou during the Maoist period has been noticed by other researchers,see Zhu Yujing, Guojia tongzhi,difang zhengzhi yu Wenzhou de jidujiao [State Rule,Local Politics and Christianity in Wenzhou],(Hong Kong:Ph. D. dissertation in the Chinese University of Hong Kong,2011),100;and for more detailed discussion,see Wang Xiaoxuan,Maoism and Grassroots Religion:The Communist Revolution and the Reinvention of Religious Life in China (Oxford:Oxford University Press,2020),95,102,119-123.

〔3〕 I invoke the definition of mass conversion from Yang and Tamney as "the phenomenon of religious conversion happening to many individuals in a society within a relatively short period of time." See Yang Fenggang and Joseph B. Tamney,"Exploring Mass Conversion to Christianity Among the Chinese:An Introduction," Sociology of Religion,67. 2,(2006),126. The concept of conversion as used in this paper refers to a shift from a particular religion or a state of irreligion to another religion,which involves joining a new religious group,practicing a new religious lifestyle,and adhering to the creeds and rituals of the new religion. In the context of Chinese Christianity,conversion is often expressed as "believing in Christianity" (xinjiao),"believing in Jesus" (xinyesu),"believing in the Lord" (xinzhu),"entering the Church" (rujiao),see Joseph Tse-Hei Lee,The Bible and the Gun:Christianity in South China,1860—1900,(New York:Routledge,2003),xxviii. The statement of conversion by Wenzhou Christians is no different from that of Chaozhou Christians.

〔4〕 For the discussion of this macro-level explanation,see Katrin Fiedler,"China's 'Christianity Fever' Revisited:Towards a Community-Oriented Reading of Christian Conversion in China," Journal of Current Chinese Affairs,39. 4,(2010),79-80,84. Fiedler's research focuses on the process theory of conversion,trying to combine several micro-level explanations. It is of note that she highlights the meaning of the community in the Christian religion. However,what she argues,namely,the communality of Christian practice,which fills a gap opened up by the change in traditional familial and social structure,does not touch on the fact that the new form of family represented by the Protestant congregation is probably still quite marginal in the traditional family-centered moral order in local society, and its implication of "family" is not without influence from the traditional conception of the clan.

Christianity in rural areas, suggesting the influence of specific individual needs arising from deprivation[5]. This mode of conversion tends to be driven by utility, even though the practical considerations of converts may eventually be transformed by deeper understanding of the unworldly concerns of the Christian faith[6]. In another approach, some scholars give more heed to the function of social networks in proselytization. Several scholars recently used this paradigm, referring to the concept of "Guanxi" (关系) to illustrate the conversion process to Christianity among Chinese. For example, they stressed the influence of generosity, sharing, hospitality, and compassion of members in a religious organization as key factors in conversion, as well as the effect of introductions from relatives or friends[7].

These two micro-level explanations can of course, apply to the conversion process of Wenzhou Christians. However, they do not fully explain the way in which mass conversion takes place. If religious conversion for practical reasons implies that the converts are sick, divorced, infertile, and otherwise unfortunate whether they are active seekers or not it is difficult to imagine that these sorts of individual needs would bring about a mass conversion to Christianity. Although social networks of acquaintances make the spread of Christianity more probable and efficient, the conversion theory based on networks still centers on individual religious experience and secular considerations. In short, both explanations are based on the premise of individual conversion.

To my mind, the mass conversion of Wenzhou Christians does not result from an accumulation of multiple individual decisions, but rather from an accumulation of multi-familial conversions[8]. In this article, "family," when it is connected to Christianity, strictly refers to the "household." I will highlight the case of the congregation of Qingpu Church to show how first-generation believers convert in the form of a household unit. Familial conversion includes the factors of individual needs and social networks, but, more importantly, it stems from the indigenous idea of family. The purpose of this article is to show the ethical-religious role of the household in the mass conversion of Wenzhou Christians.

2. The Church and Statistics: Background

Qingpu Church is in the Heyang area of eastern Wenzhou. It is a member of Heyang Pastoral

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〔5〕 See Han Heng & Wang Ying, "Xuqiuxing guixin he xidexing guixin: nongcun shuren shehui de jidujiao guixin" [Need-oriented Conversion and Acquisition-based Conversion: Chritianization in Rural China], Beijing shifan daxue xuebao [Journal of Beijing Normal University], no. 5, (2014), 143-44. See also Jin Ze & Qiu Yonghui, eds, Zongjiao lanpishu: Zhongguo zongjiao baogao [Annual Report on Religions in China], (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe [Social Science Academic Press], 2010), 192.

〔6〕 Cf. Li Huawei, "Kunan yu gaijiao: henan sandi xiangcun minzhong gaixin jidujiao de shehui genyuan tanxi" [Suffering and Conversion: The Exploration on Social Causes of Peasant's Conversion to Christianity in Henan Province], Zhongguo nongye daxue xuebao [China Agricultural University Journal], no. 3, (2012), 81-91; Gubo Qi, Zhenhua Liang and Xiaoyun Li, "Christian Conversion and the Re-imagining of Illness and Healthcare in Rural China," The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology, 15. 5 (2014), 409; Zhou Lang, Sun Qiuyun, "Yinbing xinjiao nongmin de zongjiao xinli jiqi yanbian" [The Pschology of Peasant Religious Conversion for the Purpose of Disease Control], Shehui [Society], no. 4, (2017), 14 ff.

〔7〕 E. g. see Christie Chui-Shan Chow, "Guanxi and Gospel: Conversion to Seventh-day Adventism in Contemporary China," Social Sciences and Missions, vol. 26, (2013), 167-198; Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, "Guanxi and Gospel: Mapping Christian Networks in South China," in Albert L. Park & David K., eds, Encountering Modernity: Christianity in East Asia and Asian America, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 71-94.

〔8〕 Leung Ka-lun, Gaigekaifang yilai de zhongguo nongcun jiaohui [The Rural Churches of Mainland China Since 1978], (Hong Kong: Alliance Bible Seminary, 1999), 229. However, Leung did not yet make a further discussion on this topic.

District along with twelve other churches[9]. A deceased native elder states in his memoir that CIM (China Inland Mission) missionaries had already left their footprint in Heyang as early as 1881. At the turn of the 20th century, Heyang was one of the main areas of CIM missionary efforts. Because of the fast growth of inquirers and converts in this area, Mrs. Grace Stott, who was in charge of the work in Wenzhou at that time, decided in 1899 to build a new chapel in Heyang's Changxia as an outpost to serve emerging pastoral needs[10]. The Changxia chapel became a center for worship services and Bible learning as well as for evangelical extension to other parts of Heyang. The establishment of Qingpu Church served a congregation comprising believers from three villages: Yantou, Miaohou, and Xiahua. The earliest convert was a woman named Wang Aimei, who had married Yantou and was proselytized by her father ten miles away in another village in 1935. In 1958, Changxia Church was shut down under the political campaign of "great leap in religious work" executed by local governments[11], and several believers began to meet in Aimei's home and then in Lin Qingming's house, after he and his family converted in 1965 for the sake of his wife, who suffered from a strange skin disease. With a steady increase in the number of believers, the congregation gradually formed. In 1981, when Changxia Church reopened with the restoration of religious property and church ministry, the believers from Yantou, Miaohou, and Xiahua began religious life there again. Throughout the 1980s, the scattered congregations in Heyang gradually established another twelve churches in succession, including Qingpu Church, which was founded in 1988. Thereafter, Changxia Church was no longer the center of religious life but became one member among several churches in one pastoral district.

According to Qingpu Church's intramural statistics, by 2017 there were 534 households on the register. In Yantou, the statistics counted 152 households and 555 persons in total, among whom were 140 baptized believers. Of the 152 families, one third were first-generation Christian families. Only one household converted in the 1950s. In the 1960s, that number grew to three. Ten, twelve, and eleven families respectively turned to Christianity in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s; and since 2000, there have been five families who started to believe in Jesus. After the first-generation families who experienced the conversion process, the remaining hundred or so families are all descendants of the original convert families. To represent the start of their belief in the Lord, they always filled out the registration form with the words of Zhi-you (至幼, from infancy), Cong-xiao-xin (从小信, from childhood), Chu-sheng-qi (出生起, from birth onwards), Yi-chuan-xin (遗传信, inheriting parent's belief), Mu-fu-xin (母腹信, from the womb) or Jia-chuan (家传, familial heritage). This implies that they did not receive their religious identity through their own decision; rather, they inherited the faith of their parents or grandparents. Thus, the surge of Christianity in this village by over five hundred

[9] It is necessary to notice that the Heyang Pastoral District is a self-governance organization, while it also keeps a tight relationship with the local TSPM and is recognized by the local Religious Affairs Bureau.

[10] Anonym, "Tidings from the Provinces," China's Millions: North American Edition, (Philadelphia: China Inland Mission, 1898), 70; George H. Seville, "Progress in the Work at Wen-chow," China's Millions: North American Edition, (Philadelphia: China Inland Mission, 1907), 66; Edward Hunt, "C. I. M. Work in the Prefecture of Wenchow," China's Millions: North American Edition, (Philadelphia: China Inland Mission, 1912), 110-111.

[11] For details of the "great leap in religious work" and its aftermath in Wenzhou, see Wang Xiaoxuan, Maoism and Grassroots Religion, 98-105. As Wang pointed out, the violent campaign against Christianity in Wenzhou in 1958, which stems from the tension between local cadres and church members before that time, was an unintended consequence of the Great Leap Forward.

converts in about 70 years is in large part related to familial heritage. In the process of inheritance, religious identity is always ascribed[12]. This is based on the linking of Christianity with the family and is premised on familial conversion.

3. The Household as a Christian Family

The use of "household" as a unit for counting the number of believers is quite a common practice in Heyang Pastoral District and even in other traditional churches in Wenzhou, whether they are official churches or house churches. According to the local tradition in Heyang, the household is the smallest part of a paternal Chia (家, usually refers to an extended family), and its independence is related to the system of the division of Chia[13]. For instance, if a family has three sons and the elder brother gets married, as long as his new family eats separately from his parents and his two other unmarried brothers—that is, if he begins to have what the locals call ò-zè (锅灶, cooking stove), even if they are still living together in one Chia—the division is considered complete and there are two households[14]. If, after marriage, he does not separate from his parents but remains in the parental household without division, then his father is still the head of the family, and they are one household. If the three brothers all get married and divide the Chia into three parts, then there are naturally three households. In this case, the parent usually lives with the elder brother's new family. Therefore, even if Chia is a fundamental element when we understand Chinese society, the household, which comprises two or three generations in one family, is the smallest unit in the social structure[15].

The Christian family as a household is similar but not identical to the religious family in traditional Chinese society. The good life in a traditional Chinese family, as C. K. Yang stated, "was not entirely within human control, but needed the blessing of spiritual forces.[16]" People would seek well-being through ancestor worship and the cult of gods in their clan and village community, and the various parts of the house were also associated with different deities, making the home space the center of cult practices. Among other traditions, ancestor worship was a family religion in the real

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[12] Xiao Zhitian had discovered this feature in the conversion of Wenzhou Christians. See Xiao Zhitian, "Gaige, kaifang yu zongjiao wenti" [Reform, Opening and the Problem of Religion], 3. Several researchers see this phenomenon as a result of the interactions between families. They emphasize that family members usually convert secondarily due to their acknowledgement of the Christian values and practices held by other family members converted before. For instance, see Han Heng & Wang Ying, "Xuqiuxingguixin he xidexingguixin" [Need-oriented Conversion and Acquisition-based Conversion], 144-45. However, this view always ignores that "believing" (xin) is a self-evident action for those children in the Christian family, for whom, the religious identity is fundamentally ascribed rather than acquired.

[13] See Hsiao-tung Fei, Peasant Life in China: A Field Study of Country Life in the Yangtze Valley, (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1939), 27-55.

[14] The dividing of the stove is an economic and religious symbol in the practice of family division in traditional Chinese society, see Arthur P. Wolf, "Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors," in Arthur P. Wolf, ed., Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1974), 133.

[15] Cf. Zeng Yi, "Kongzi gaizhi yu rujia zhi xiaodao guannian" [Confucius' Reformation and the Confucian Concept of Filial Piety], in Wu Fei, ed., Hun yu sang: chuantong yu xiandai de jiating liyi [Marriage and Funeral: The Traditional and Modern Familial Etiquette], (Beijing: Zongjiao wenhua chubanshe [Religious Culture Press], 2012), 51. It should be stressed that the morality of exchange in everyday life in Wenzhou precisely revolves around the household.

[16] See C. K. Yang, Religion in Chinese Society, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), 28.

sense,integrating and maintaining the family as a basic unit of Chinese society[17]. It was the religious system,dominated by ancestor worship and supplemented by the worship of other gods,made the traditional Chinese family a religious family[18]. However,the "family" here was not only a household represented by the so-called nuclear family;instead,it was a continuum,which could be extended to the family within wufu (五服,Five Mourning Grades to represent five generations),to the larger clan,and even to the entire nation[19].

In contrast to this extendable religious family structure,the Christian family reflected in the analysis of statistics on Qingpu Church is explicitly a household. A family's religious identity profoundly shapes the religious identity of a person in that family. The most obvious example of this is the change in women's religious adherence. Traditionally, a Chinese woman's status in the sacrificial cult was dependent on her husband's family rather than her father's family[20]. This phenomenon applies equally to the daughter of a Christian family,who generally will turn to the popular Chinese religion when she marries into a non-Christian family. The reverse is also true[21]. Hence,the female's changing religious identity in the movement between two families with different religious beliefs suggests that Christianity is mostly connected to the paternal family within the broader religious locality.

However,the technique of counting believers around the household reveals a hidden feature: Regardless of how individuals understand the Christian faith,whether baptized or not,they are still counted as within the total number of believers. This approach shows a different understanding of how one obtains a Christian identity. As Ying Fuk-Tsang has noted, Christian identity was recognized based on the receipt of baptism according to "Christian tradition"[22]. For example,we can see this statistical technique in The Christian Occupation of China written by the Special Committee on Survey and Occupation in 1922,which distinguished between inquirers and communicants in its counts. Consistent with this tradition,missionaries were concerned with the conversion of a particular individual,and baptism was the result of a test of personal morality (not smoking opium,living an upright life,and so on) and religious life (especially not worshipping idols),and only those who passed the test were formally accepted as members of a Christian congregation[23].

Even if most of the traditional churches in Wenzhou also underline the significance of baptism for the individual communicant's identity,the fact is that in their statistics they consider a large

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〔17〕 Ibid.,29-31. See also Jordan Paper,Chinese Religion and Familism:The Basis of Chinese Culture,Society,and Government,(New York:Bloomsbury,2019).

〔18〕 See Paper,Chinese Religion and Familism,54.

〔19〕 See Michio Suenari,"The 'Religious Family' Among the Chinese of Central Taiwan," in George A. DeVos & Takao Sofue, eds.,Religion and the Family in East Asia,(Berkeley and Los Angeles:University of California Press,1987),169-184.

〔20〕 Paper,Chinese Religion and Familism,14.

〔21〕 Of course,the opposite phenomenon also happens,albeit relatively rare. That is,when the daughter from a Christian family marries into a non-Christian family,the husband follows her Christian identity. And the reverse is also true. It is a product of the changes of the family order in the modern historical flux,especially that after 1978. It is not just about the increased independence of the nuclear family after family division,but also about the tendency of the private emotional relationship between husband and wife to move away from the ethically obligatory relationship between father and son. See Huang Jianbo,"Sirentang" jishi [The Story of "Si Ren Tang"],(Beijing:Zhongyang minzu daxue boshi lunwen [Ph. D. dissertation in Minzu University of China],2003),55-56.

〔22〕 Fuk-tsang Ying,"Zhongguo jidujiao de quyu fazhan:1918,1949,2004," 159,170.

〔23〕 E. g. see W. E. Soothill,A Mission in China,(Edinburgh and London:Oliphant,Anderson & Ferrier,1907),81-91.

number of unbaptized people as believers,regardless of the frequency of their attendance at Sunday services[24]. This suffices to show that a family's strong Christian identity is not considered negated when a particular family member,often a husband or son,plays truant from church;this is the case even when he does not accept the Christian faith as true. Apart from the statistics,other reasonable evidence of this fact is that regardless of their degree of recognition of Christianity,all members of a Christian family qualify to attend the annual Christmas feast held by the church,which is seen as the most important festival of the congregation. The collective presence at the feast is regarded as a reunion or returning home[25].

The emphasis on the householdseen in techniques of statistics reflects the value placed on family by the Chinese people in their understanding of Christianity as their religious adherence[26]. Why is it that the household,and not extended family or an individual,is considered the unit of religious identity? This widespread cultural phenomenon cannot be explained solely in terms of Christian doctrinal expectations about the turning of a whole family to the Lord,as they interpret the Bible literally;but more prominently in terms of the ethical-religious implication of the household entailed in their conversion process.

4. "For the Sake of…":Family as a Community of Shared Life

The possibility of familial conversion primarily depends on the ethical aspect of the household. Through random and intensive interviews with interlocutors in Qingpu Church in the summer of 2018,I encountered 39 cases of conversion. The 39 families involved in these cases were scattered in various districts in Heyang. Among them,four families converted before the 1920s and three in the 1930s. The remaining 32 families converted in the decades after 1949. Because conversion stories before 1949 are extremely scarce,the analysis will center on cases in the post-1949 period.

Apparently,familial conversion is concerned with individual needs and social networks. The local congregation uses two categories to distinguish the types of conversion: wà-nā-sàn (患难信, conversion in a situation of adversity) and bīng-ö-sàn (平安信, conversion in a situation of wellness). Wà-nā is always related to illness or mental disease,both considered as problems of the body. Bīng-ö has nothing to do with physical and mental suffering;nevertheless,it is also concerned with various frustrations of everyday life. Among all 32 cases,there are only six who converted in the situation of bīng-ö. They turned to Christianity because of loneliness,the desire to have a son,the ritual burden of superstitious practices,a son's irritable temper,and a daughter's divorce. In comparison,the remaining 26 cases all involved varying degrees of adversity,such as persistent

[24] The statistics on believers in Changxia Church more clearly reflects this situation. In 2015,there were 1866 believers counted in this church in total,among which 638 persons never attended the Sunday worship.

[25] In 2019,in his speech before the banquet celebrating Christmas,Ling Congli,the pastor of Qingpu Church,said,"God is our father and Jesus is our brother;today we come back home to celebrate Jesus' birthday." This statement,which sounds very much like the call of God and Jesus in the Tai-Ping Kingdom,also appeared in the local church's Christmas discourse.

[26] It's worth noting that some churches in the Wenzhou City area have begun to use "individual" instead of "household" as the unit used to count believers. However,the importance of household in their perception of religious identity has not completely changed. The change in statistical practice stems in large part from the increased mobility of believers between churches and is no longer confined within the scope of the congregation community originally rooted in the village.

headache, handicap, car accident, children's premature death, blindness, cancer, psychasthenia due to demon-possession, etc. We should note that, in spite of the distinction by those local believers[27], both categories involve practical considerations and are related to particular deprivations in everyday life, as many researchers have discerned.

Meanwhile, social networks also served as a crucial role in conversions. Most of these cases indicate that evangelical efforts and introductions from relatives or neighbors provided opportunities for exposure to Christianity. Furthermore, a small number of instances show that other social occasions could function to spread Christianity, such as being evangelized by a doctor in the hospital or by a business friend[28].

However, the reasons for familial conversion do not merely stem from internal personal existential crises and outside religious provision, but more significantly from the diffusion of the sense of crisis among the family. From interlocutors' narratives, there are seven cases of conversion for an individual's own sake, and the remaining 25 conversions were for the sake of their families. But even in the former case of individuals who were motivated by their own needs, their families also converted with them. An interlocutor and her/his families are in an intersubjective relationship. One turns to Christianity for oneself; at the same time, her/his families take the step of conversion for the sake of her/him too.

For instance, the story of Lin Yandi, a villager living in Yantou, illustrates attunement of those within a family. Lin converted in 1961 when he was 30 years old. It was the time of the Great Leap Forward, and he was responsible for building a new reservoir in Heyang. However, he was suddenly stricken with aplastic anemia, which made him bedridden and poor in health. As there was no available cure from other medical treatments and local religious methods, an older woman from adjacent Xiahua village introduced him to Christianity and persuaded him to convert. He did so, and his wife converted too. His daughter-in-law, while telling of the conversion story of this family, emphasized not Yandi's personal need and his conversion, but that her "mother-in-law believed in Jesus for the sake of my father-in-law."

This is not an isolated case. In all 32 stories, there are eight very similar to the story above. All indicate that the illness of a male householder brought about the conversion of a whole household[29]. Like Yandi's daughter-in-law, these interlocutors also spoke of conversion for the sake of their husband or father. In these narratives, we do not hear the decision to convert made by the male sufferer himself, who has authority on other families, but rather the families' desire for the

〔27〕 This distinction is not insignificant, but rather a reflection of the locals' emphasis on the intactness of the individual body and its connection to the integrity and impunity of the family. Even more, people usually endow those believers who converted for adversity with higher assessment in terms of their persisting the faith; by contrast, those who converted in the situation of wellbeing, although they converted for certain needs, are seen as dabblers who do not really understand the meaning of suffering and God's salvation, therefore are apt to sway.

〔28〕 Although the conversion stories before 1949 are nebulous, there are two cases in the 1920s which indicate that the conversion was due to the elder's illness in the family. In addition, Wang Aimei's parents' home turned to Christianity because of her father's being taken ill and her aunt's introduction. It can be seen that so-called individual need and social network also were important factors for villager's conversion to Christianity before 1949.

〔29〕 The year of conversion and the individual need for each of these eight cases is as follows: 1950 (bad health), 1963 (bad health), 1963 (persistent fever), 1965 (appendicitis), 1966 (bad health), 1971 (encephalitis), 1987 (cancer), 1995 (cancer).

sufferer to get better. In other words, their conversion is not the result of a demand from the authority but represents the power relation as a natural emotional and responsible connection between husband and wife; father and children.

Similarly, adult female and unmarried offspring in a family also experience conversion of their families for their sake, as manifested respectively by thirteen cases for the former[30] and ten cases for the latter[31]. The conversion of Wang Xianglan's family and that of Fan Ailing's family illustrate these two situations separately. Wang converted in 1975 because her mother-in-law suffered a demonic possession at the age of 43. Wang's father-in-law, Lin Qingxiang, was a law-officer in a county of Wenzhou during the Cultural Revolution. Once, he sentenced a teenager to death for stealing, and a few months later, he died of cancer. Wang's mother-in-law asked a local medium for an explanation of her husband's disease and was told that the condemned teenager had turned into a ferocious ghost due to the injustice done him. It was the teenager who sickened her husband. Three months later, her husband passed away, and she began to have trouble sleeping at night as her health deteriorated, an effect which was attributed to her being followed by the ghost. Lin Qingxiang was the elder brother of Lin Qingming, who had converted with his family ten years ago in 1965. It was Qingming's wife who introduced the gospel to them. According to Wang's account, she believed in Jesus "for the sake of my mother-in-law."

Fan's family turned to Christianity in 1999. Before she got married, her mother-in-law had been converted for many years. But she and her husband did not follow their mother's religious identity. The turning point occurred when her elder son finished his college entrance examination and began behaving strangely, barricading himself indoors. After fruitless attempts to seek medical treatment, Fan heard some "superstitious people" saying that there were many ghosts in her family that caused her son's problem. She was terrified and turned to belief in Jesus at the persuasion of her mother-in-law, with her husband and son following her choice.

These three stories all evidence conversion for the sake of families. In most cases, this leads to familial conversion within a whole household[32]. This fairly common occurrence implies that so-called "deprivation" is never only a personal crisis, but rather a social fact, which is seen as abnormal

[30] The years and the motivations for the thirteen cases of conversion in adult females are listed below: 1950 (infertility), 1953 (bad health), 1958 (bad health), 1965 (skin disease), 1970 (strange disease), 1975 (demon-possession), 1975 (bad health after giving birth), 1978 (eye disease), 1980 (psychasthenia), 1980 (ritual burden of superstitious practices), 1982 (bad health), 1984 (seeing phantom wandering while sleeping), 2014 (daughter's divorce).

[31] The following are the years and the motivations for the ten cases of conversion in children or juveniles: 1950 (infant's premature death), 1955 (bad health), 1960 (son's stomach disease), 1964 (infant's leg broken shortly after birth), 1973 (daughter's bad health), 1976 (daughter's blindness), 1988 (son's hepatitis), 1990 (son's bad temper), 1999 (son's mental disease), 2006 (son gambling).

[32] Among all cases, there are three indicating that the conversion took place as an individual rather than a familial event. One is a woman who converted in 2014 because of her daughter's divorce. Her husband had died before her conversion, and she was living alone. The remaining two cases are respectively on conversions in 1987 and 1984, and the converts are adult females, one of whom converted for her eye problem, and the other converted because she was scared in sleeping by a phantom wandering at the bedside. Their husbands and parents-in-law obstructed their conversions. However, both families turned to Christianity later, separately because of a husband's illness and a father-in-law's belief in the existence of a ghost in the house. The two stories indicate the relative low position of a young woman compared to the authority of her husband and parent in the paternal family. Furthermore, both reflect that not all families have an attunement and intimate relationship between members. The power relationship is still the motive of any emotional and responsible relationship in Chinese family.

in terms of the local collective consciousness. Suffering of an individual is never understood as part of a normal and happy state that a family should possess but represents unhappiness and a disruption of the shared life.

Therefore,it can be seen that the attunement of individuals to one another within families is an extension of their ethical life. The traditional culture of the Chinese family leaves a deep mark here. Confucianism,as Yang indicated,rationalized ancestor worship,a family religion with a supernatural cult,as a set of ethical norms and rites based on emotional and responsible relationships such as filial piety and love within the family[33]. The family,here,is a community of shared life consisting of three categories of relationships according to the traditional Commentaries on Mourning Apparel in Ceremonial Etiquette (《仪礼 · 丧服传》): the relationships of one body between father and son, between husband and wife,and between brothers;along with the larger oneness of the family which is also seen as one body. The integration of all members in a family endowed the attunement in their interrelationship with a sense of moral imperative.

Even if the traditional family can be extended to the kinship system,the family as a household still has its own peculiar boundary. On the one hand,the distinction of etiquette between relatives within and outside of a household highlights the independence of the household as a community of shared life. For example, in traditional Chinese society, the gradations of mourning obligations according to the intimacy of the kinship relation with the dead expressed the different degrees of social obligations[34]. As Yang writes,"The closer the kinship with the dead,the greater the degree of grief required by convention. Children of the deceased were expected to weep in the most heartrending manner, eat the coarsest food, wear the roughest mourning garments, and observe mourning rules for the longest period, which was generally three years[35]". However, nephews or grandchildren of the dead were not obliged to obey these moral and ritual imperatives.

On the other hand,the division of the family also testifies to the boundary of the household. The division is primarily manifested as a separation between the new family and the old family in terms of livelihood; namely, separation of economic life[36]. Even though a household participates in the exchange system between family circles,its independence as a unit is still distinct. The household exists as an economic entity,within which the interdependence between various members implies a relationship of responsibility in the sense of sharing weal and woe.

In short,the fact that one family member converted for the sake of the other demonstrates the care and concern for the suffering family member, representing a shared bearing of adversity. Individual suffering,thus,is also familial suffering. In this sense,the distinction between conversions in the situation of wà-nā and bīng-ö more explicitly refers not only to the matter of the individual but to the wellbeing of a whole family. The sharing nature and morality of the family is precisely the ethical foundation of familial conversion.

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〔33〕 Yang,*Religion in Chinese Society*,48

〔34〕 See Ibid. ,46-47.

〔35〕 Ibid. ,36.

〔36〕 See Fei,Peasant Life in China,66-69.

5. Conversion Ritual and Patriarchal God

A community of shared life is an ethical ideal of the family. Even if it has played a pivotal role in the familial conversion movement among Wenzhou Christians, we find many people who have never been to church, and even question Christianity. This means that not everyone in a household is committed to Christianity as true or as a path toward salvation. However, their family members who are more enthusiastic, usually adult females, see them not as unbelievers but as lacking knowledge of the faith, and Christianity is still considered the religion of the whole family. This situation is a result not only of the ethical role of the household but also the relationship between the household and God contained in the conversion ritual. The religious role of the conversion ritual profoundly expresses the converts' understanding of God and of the conversion itself.

Kēisī and the Role of Iconoclasm

It is quite common to attribute villagers' decision to convert to the effectiveness of the healing God. Many people regard the religious experience of the miracle of being healed as a vital sign of the power of God. In Heyang, some miracle stories are prevalent. The same applies to Yantou and other nearby villages. Yandi's healing story is one example. After his conversion and mainly (as he thought) because of the prayers of his family and other Christians coming to his home, his anemia was gradually cured. I have heard this story from many people during my fieldwork, and it was in every case considered a clear demonstration of God's almighty power and the hospitality and love of the Christian community. However, the anemia described by Yandi himself became leukemia in the mouths of his daughter-in-law and others. Healing stories always become more miraculous in circulation and were an inducement for villagers to convert to Christianity.

To be sure, effectiveness has crucial implications for acceptance of a powerful God, and to some, indeed, the ineffectiveness of the Christian God was a reason for leaving and even for speaking disparagingly of Christianity. Still, the view that a miraculous event is the prerequisite of conversion is never identified with the local congregation's basic understanding of the conversion itself.

For the congregation in Qingpu, conversion is not merely a personal inner decision, but a public ritual that always precedes miraculous events. It has been common local knowledge that in order to be healed by God, one needs consistent petitionary prayers with a pure and hallowed heart, which is premised on confessing one's sins. This technology of self is a result of the recognition of self as a sinner, and the transformation of self-awareness initially takes place in the conversion ritual.

The locals call the ritual kēisī, which means deciding to believe in Jesus[37]. The word kēisī in the dialect derives from the word kēisí (开始, beginning), but with a different pronunciation. The small change of one syllable connotes a practice of defamiliarization, particularizing the conversion as an occasion with a ritual boundary. It usually happens at the moment when someone desires to turn to Christianity. The ritual process generally goes like this: several churchmen or prestigious persons among the local congregation go to a family and confirm the commitment of an individual and his/her families to believing in Jesus. At the same time, the churchmen ordinarily spell out the Christian

[37] The saying of kēisī is only used in Heyang and is not familiar to those in other areas of Wenzhou. However, the conversion ritual itself is of no variant.

doctrines of the sinful nature of humankind, the ethical relationship between humans and God, the cunning of Satan, the falsehood of idolatry and its detrimental effects, and the efficacy of confession and prayers. In order to avoid conflicts resulting from the possibility of ineffectiveness, they clarify that the decision to convert does not necessarily bring healing and peace and that what matters is the salvation of souls and eternal hope. Even so, they still tell the family that it is easy for God to do anything they need, assuring them of God's almighty power and leaving room for human effort in terms of religious and moral imperatives. If the family makes up their mind to convert, the churchmen start a sinner's prayer, help them clean up their idols, and put a li-bai-dan (礼拜单, a paper with a red cross and a calendar) on the door or wall in the front hall, to certify that they have accepted Jesus as their God[38]. Lastly, they pray a final blessing. In this way, a conversion ritual is completed.

The core of kēisī is iconoclasm. Zhang Zhongliang, an elder of Qingpu Church who has taken pastoral care of local believers since the later Cultural Revolution, told me that if a family does not first take down all idols from their household, the churchmen will not conduct a kēisī for them, and thus, other believers will not come to pray. This means that assistance from the congregation and effectiveness of prayer relies on the family's complete rupture with idolatry.

Two practices in the process of iconoclasm are particularly striking. The first is the activation of a diabolizing stance toward indigenous religious practices, persons, and materials, all of which are seen as the work of the devil[39]. The diabolization can be traced back to the missionary semiotic ideology of the 19th century, although its teaching has a strong basis in the Bible, which is usually cited by local believers as God's command. The other practice is that the rejection of idols is often carried out in the form of public humiliation. The idols should not only be removed, but also be burnt or smashed in public. The devil's agency dwelling in the idols makes the public humiliation more symbolic. The practice of destroying idols is precisely a proof of the converts' sincerity of conversion and wholeheartedness toward God through the violent abandonment of those false objects they worshipped before.

This iconoclasm is not created by the local congregation; rather, it was prevalent during the missionary period[40]. Most of the Protestant missionaries who came to China were concerned about the religious life of the Chinese, considered China an idolatrous nation, and made the salvation of the

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〔38〕 I was told that the form of Li-bai-dan became popular among the congregations after the recovery of church life in the 1980s. Before that, there was another sign of a red cross drawn on the wall representing a family's Christian identity.

〔39〕 Because of space limitations, this article cannot dwell on the logic of diabolization of those spirits to which local people worshiped before as helpful and intimate. Simply put, it is rooted in the prevailing practice of translation of the devil and demon to Chinese mo-gui (魔鬼, monster and evil ghost) by missionaries and the experience of gui in Chinese everyday life, especially in rural areas. For a useful discussion of this issue, see Richard Burden, "Translating Spirits: Protestants, Possessions, and the Grammars of Conversion in Shandong Province," in Richard Fox Young & Jonathan A. Seitz, eds., Aisa in the Making of Christianity: Conversion, Agency, and Indigeneity, 1600s to the Present, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 53-79。 See also Paper, Chinese Religion and Familism, 44.

〔40〕 E. g. see Gu Weimin, Jidujiao yu zhongguo jindai shehui [Christianity and Modern Chinese Society], (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshee [Shanghai People's Press], 2010), 51, 127 and 169-170; Chris White, Sacred Webs: The Social Lives and Networks of Minnan Protestants, 1840-1920s, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017), 62ff. Eric Renders, "Shattered on the Rock of Ages: Western Iconoclasm and Chinese Modernity," in Fabio Rambelli & Eric Renders, Buddhism and Iconoclasm in East Asia: A History, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 89-133.

Chinese from idolatry the focus of their evangelical enterprise[41]. Idol worship and faith in Jesus were completely incompatible. As Grace Stott wrote,one "could not be a disciple of Jesus and eat the rice of idols"[42]. This revulsion in the Christian camp for the Satanic expressed a dualism between God and Satan in terms of the alteration of religious identity. Abandoning idols not only severs the believer from the traditional setting of religious life and its categories of spirits, but more importantly,undermines to a certain extent the religious bonds of social cohesiveness. The act of repudiating a long-term relationship with the spirits means amputating social obligations and offends the local moral order. This is why conflicts between indigenous Christians and villagers caused by the practice of public destruction of idols have recurred in the history of Christianity in China[43]. Furthermore,this dualism has played a fundamental role in marking a clear boundary between the local congregation's perception of a good life versus an evil life. A popular saying among them says this:"Once an idol comes in,the Holy Spirit does not work." Even though acceptance of this saying varies,its use reflects that God is perceived as hating and shunning the evil. In this way, God is understood to have a more wrathful temperament directed against tangible evils such as idols and the action of idolatry. This is why idolatry has been seen as a sinful life in the past. It is not only evil but also a matter of sin,from which a good life must keep distant.

In this case, iconoclasm is the key to the conversion ritual and a prerequisite for healing and peace afterward. It means not only severance of links with the devil but also an overcoming of idolatrous and sinful habits from the past. Only in this way can a convert start praying to God. If a family does not clear out all idols in the house, the churchmen who come to kēisī would feel uncomfortable,fearing the anger of God upon them. The pre-existence of the conversion ritual provides us with an understanding of why the congregation never deems those who leave Christianity due to ineffectiveness as "unconverted," but rather as "undedicated" and "unchosen;" while those who secretly harbor idols at home in the kēisī are "deceivers"[44]. Churchmen always bring the behaviors of backsliding and tricks of harboring idols into Christian discourse,regarding these faults as violating the decision of conversion and practicing insincerity toward God.

An Ethical God to the Household

The point most crucial to our topic is that idols destroyed within a house during conversion rituals are always within the immediate household of those seeking to convert. The ethical boundary of a household implies its spacial boundary. The division of Chia shows not merely a kind of independence of livelihood,but the reallocation or rebuilding of the residence space. As long as there

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〔41〕 The conception that idolaters must not enter into the heaven but rather go to hell was of prevalence in missionary discourses. See Zhou Weichi,Taipingtianguo yu qishilu [Taiping Heavenly Kingdom and Revelation],(Beijing:Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe [China Social Sciences Press],2013),224-249,259.

〔42〕 Grace Stott,Twenty-Six Years of Missionary Work in China,(New York:American Tract Society,1897),33.

〔43〕 For instance,Grace Stott recorded a violent event initiated by villagers due to a public iconoclasm around 1895 in Bing-yie,a county under jurisdiction of Wenzhou. See Stott,Twenty-Six Years of Missionary Work in China,345-350.

〔44〕 This sort of discourse reflects the local congregations' idea of God and a subtle technology of imputation. On the base of dualistic cosmology of "God-Devil," which is evident in the perception of a conversion ritual without iconoclasm as a cause of God's wrath,the interpretation of the behavior of harboring idols as an act of deceiving,is to impute responsibility to the one who wants to convert and meanwhile intentionally harbors some idols,and recognize those churchmen who conduct conversion ritual and give prayers as innocent.

is one idol in a household during the kēisī, it must be cleared out[45]. In this act of conversion (for the Protestant God is never like the gods of Chinese religions with their tangible images) God's ethical quality is protruded and extended to connect with the ethical community of a spacial household. In other words, the household is regarded as the carrier of God's blessing according to the members' religious and moral actions. The goodness and salvation of God as antithetical to the evil and sin of a person, in this sense, plays a crucial part in the ethical-familial community as a body, so that Jesus who is welcomed into the household becomes the spiritual patriarch or "ruler" who enables the household's harmonious everyday life. Thus, the difference between a Christian family and a family who does not believe in Jesus is the difference in the spiritual objects to whom they entrust a happy life. We can understand why, when churchmen clear away the idols in one household containing some who do not wish to convert, it could easily cause frictions. This usually happens when churchmen do not first ascertain whether a Chia is divided or not, and then directly conduct iconoclasm in a whole ancestral house where different families live together, even though they have been divided economically.

An ethical patriarchal God, therefore, is the terminus where a conversion ritual ends; a terminus who rejects all other spirits as the devil. This cultural discontinuity produced by the ritual creates a new Christian family attached to a Christian God and a community of brotherhood via the virtue of love. In particular, this transformation of religious identity substantially separates the family from the traditional, expandable religious family; mainly in the sense of distance from the diabolized living world, forming a subculture along with other Christian families in the local area.

At this point of discontinuity, we find that the ethical and responsible boundary of the household continues to be the foundation of the conversion. Two cultural phenomena can be manifestations of this. In the first instance, it is a common notion among local congregations that the sinful conduct of individual members in a family can bring misfortune to other members. Even if many people believe that misfortunes are a result of the devil's attacks—a belief inseparable from their experiences with ghosts in the past—they find it difficult to deny that, in doctrinal terms, God is more powerful than the devil. From this viewpoint, a person's misfortune cannot originate only from evil power but is also associated with the sin of an individual, who may be the person herself/himself or others in the family. The possibility of joint responsibility stems from the local conception that a person's sinful conduct removes the patriarchal God's protection of the family, thus leaving a gap for the devil to attack; in the words of the locals, it is a pä-kau (破口, crevasse) left by one's sinful conduct for Satan's evil action. The pä-kau is never applied only to an individual, but rather to a family[46]. In this way, insistence on the doctrinal claim of a powerful God is combined with the origin of misfortune from the devil, and at the same time, this expresses the responsible relationship among families, associating one's own happiness with another's conversion and her or his religious and moral conduct. Breaking down idols in the household and urging the whole family to leave the traditional

[45] For the similar phenomenon in history, see White, Sacred Web, 69; Reinders, "Shattered on the Rock of Ages," 100.

[46] Apart from the family, the word is often used in prayers on occasion of Sunday worship when one publicly prays for God's presence in the congregation and for his help to block the pä-kau in order to protect from the Devil's attack. So, the use of this word refers to a kind of universitas which is comprised of many individuals as one body with its own boundary. In this sense, the church congregation is, at least formally, similar to the family, and is incorporated in the local moral order.

religious life is the first step in not giving place to the devil and establishing an ethical relationship with a loving and gracious God.

Another instance is that congregations hold the view that wishes of solicitude and blessings from the closest family members, rather than from others beyond the boundaries of the household, can affect God more, and therefore bring more effective results. The story of Lin Shufang is a case in point. She is from Yantou and converted in 1975 for her mother when she was seven years old. At the time when her family decided to believe in Jesus, some elderly churchmen who came to pray asked her to kneel too, to pray in tears to God, the Savior, for the recovery of her mother. Shufang spoke of this matter and told me:

> Our believers always say that the prayers from the closest family members are best, and others are there to help you. Those servants come and pray, and they still leave when they finish. At last, you should shut the door by yourselves. This means that the responsibility remains with you.

This phenomenon has been widespread in the religious life of Christian families over the past generations. It obviously indicates a moral principle that differentiates the particular responsibility inside the family community from the outside. Even if the congregation has been seen as a new family, a community of brotherhood, the story of Shufang gives prominence to the identification of the ethical relationship between humans and God with the local ethical order. In other words, the perceived action of the Christian God, to some extent, is dominated by the traditional Chinese moral principle.

We may see from the above discussions that the conversion ritual endows the independence of the household with ethical boundaries. It is through the cultural discontinuity and the Christian diabolization of the traditional religious life and its social consequences—offending of traditional gods and villagers—brought about by this ritual, that so-called "dedicated" believers mostly lose the path back to traditional religious worship, while their blessings and misfortunes in life begin to be incorporated into the system of local Christian meanings. Furthermore, a patriarchal God implies that conversion of a family is not only meant to seek the salvation of, but more crucially, to gain blessings for the whole family[47]. Therefore, conversion means that a family needs to direct their fate in life in a new way.

6. Conclusion

We have observed that the emotional and responsible relationships among families and the process of the conversion ritual are essential for familial conversion. The ethical-religious role of the household contributes to its emergence. It is these multi-familial conversions that have produced such a large conversion movement in Wenzhou after 1949. Here, what is essential in the familial conversion is not merely the value of individual salvation, but the fact that through the religious

[47] See also Huang, "Sirentang" jishi [The Story of "Si Ren Tang"], 55.

conversion of the whole family, this community of shared life can be kept under the safeguard of a patriarchal God.

Although this article only deals with one case in the Heyang area of Wenzhou, the phenomenon of familial conversion is very common in the whole city[48]. I should emphasize that my aim here has not been to explain why the mass conversion of Wenzhou Christians happened after the establishment of the Communist Regime, which would be a huge project involving a much broader historical context and its changes. My aim is only to discuss the way in which the mass conversion took place. The reason for the importance of this preliminary study lies in its efforts to reveal the complexity of Chinese conversion events, a complexity that is usually ignored by the two most widely accepted views.

First, many researchers think that the end of the Cultural Revolution led to a particular historical period favorable for the development of Christianity in rural China[49]. This widespread view not only ignores the fact that the number of Christians in specific regions actually grew rapidly between 1949 and 1978, but also obscures the continuity and stability of local cultural history by a dominant epochal division based on a macro-political and economic discourse. Actually, the dynamics of conversion did not vary with the changes or concurrent conditions of epochs. The repeating model of familial conversion spans two divided periods of the first three decades (1949-1978) and the remaining four decades (post-1978) and even extends to the time before 1949. It is rooted in the order of the traditional Chinese family whose value was and is still a dominant power in the local society, even though the structure of clan with its significance in social organization has been in decline since the time of the New Culture Movement.

Another view, the individual conversion theory, sees only the pragmatic attitude of the Chinese people toward their life, but overlooks the significance of the collectivism of the family. This article hopes to point out that in order to understand individual conversion of Christians in China in the past century, it is first necessary to observe and analyze conversion within the context of the family as a community. Familial conversion does not primarily seek the individual religious experience and salvation that missionaries valued in their emphasis on the sincerity of conversion, and even lacks the transformative power that Christian moral individualism could bring to the society[50]. In contrast, the Christian family forged by familial conversion is concerned with, above all, happiness in their worldly life and how to adapt themselves to traditional moral principles. The primary pursuit in Christian life practices is that God may give blessings and love in return for compliance with religious and moral imperatives, which are related to the discourse of sin. Here, individual conversion, which is mainly represented by the problem of unbelief of individual members within a Christian family and recurs in the discourse of "rebirth," is better understood as a re-conversion within the context of

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〔48〕 For similar phenomenon in other region of China, see ibid., 59, 69-70.

〔49〕 See Leung Ka-lun, Gaigekaifang yilai de zhongguo nongcun jiaohui [*The Rural Churches of Mainland China Since* 1978], 23, 29-30, 110, 198-201; Ouyang Sutong, *Zhuanxing shiyexia de zhongguo nongcun zongjiao* [Rural Religions in the Transformation of China], (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2009), 221-222.

〔50〕 Peter van Rooden, "Nineteenth-Century Representations of Missionary Coversion and the Transformation of Western Christianity," in Peter van der Veer, ed., Conversion to Modernities: The Globalization of Christianity, (New York: Routledge, 1996), 69; Webb Keane, Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 149.

that familial conversion.

It is clear from the above reflections that the familial aspect of conversion is the key to understanding the mass conversion of Wenzhou Christians. We can see that the family, rather than the individual, is the unavoidable ethical and even existential factor by which we may better grasp the indigenous development of Christianity in China. I believe that only when we comprehend the family and its powerful and nuanced history and values within Chinese society will we come to understand the meaning of Christianity to Chinese people and their practices of faith.

中文题目:

家庭归信:户在温州基督徒大众归信中的伦理-宗教角色的个案研究

张杰克

香港中文大学神道学硕士

地址:中国浙江省温州市龙湾区永中街道罗东北街 31 号

电话:13588448728

电邮:hmugu2005@gmail.com

摘　要:学界一般将中国的基督教热视为文革后的现象,然而温州基督徒的大众归信可追溯至文革结束之前。家庭归信是温州基督徒 1949 年后大众归信之所以可能的关键因素;是一个个的家庭归信积累成了大众归信的浪潮。本文通过对温州河阳地区的青浦教会群体的田野调查与个案分析,试图揭示温州基督徒的家庭归信模式,也就是以户为单位、而非以个人为单位的归信,是我们理解温州基督徒的归信时需要留意的重要现象。本文认为,正是家人间的情感与责任关系所塑造的家庭的同一性,以及地方基督教的归信仪式,共同构成了户的伦理-宗教角色,并且推动了家庭归信的出现。这项初步的研究,试图引发我们更多关注家庭这一中国社会中在伦理上与生存论上相当根本的文化因素;家庭,是我们理解基督教在中国的本土化发展不可回避的。

关键词:家庭归信,大众归信,基督教家庭,归信仪式,破除偶像