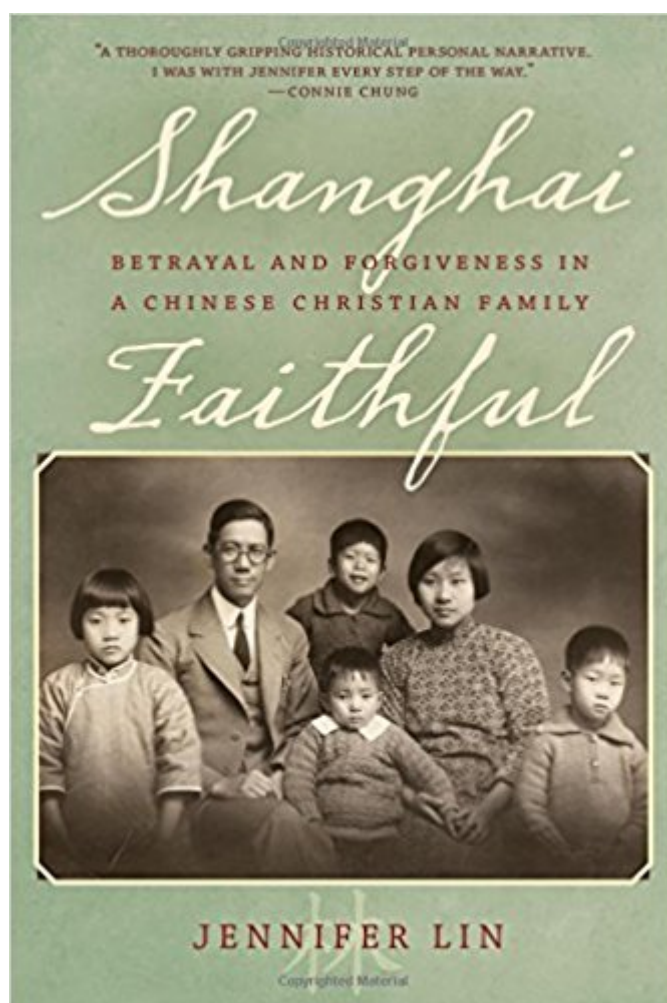




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# Shanghai Faithful: Betrayal And Forgiveness In A Chinese Christian Family



## Synopsis

Within the next decade, China could be home to more Christians than any country in the world. Through the 150-year saga of a single family, this book vividly dramatizes the remarkable religious evolution of the world's most populous nation. *Shanghai Faithful* is both a touching family memoir and a chronicle of the astonishing spread of Christianity in China. Five generations of the Lin family "buffeted by history's crosscurrents and personal strife" bring to life an epoch that is still unfolding. A compelling cast "a poor fisherman, a doctor who treated opium addicts, an Ivy League "educated priest, and the charismatic preacher Watchman Nee" sets the book in motion. Veteran journalist Jennifer Lin takes readers from remote nineteenth-century mission outposts to the thriving house churches and cathedrals of today's China. The Lin family "and the book's central figure, the Reverend Lin Pu-chi" offer witness to China's tumultuous past, up to and beyond the betrayals and madness of the Cultural Revolution, when the family's resolute faith led to years of suffering. Forgiveness and redemption bring the story full circle. With its sweep of history and the intimacy of long-hidden family stories, *Shanghai Faithful* offers a fresh look at Christianity in China's past, present, and future.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Lin writes with a novelist's narrative flair and grace and a historian's fine eye for detail, and as she sketches the personalities, dreams, and life circumstances of her relatives, her thorough research and compassion for her subjects are evident. Scholars and lay readers interested in China

will enjoy this vital work." *Publishers Weekly*, starred review "This panoramic, true story spans thousands of miles, about 160 years, two continents, and myriad cultural upheavals and human lives. But Jennifer Lin's *Shanghai Faithful* would not glow as it does unless it were so well told." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* "A fascinating story...this work is an intriguing interlocation between memory and fact." *Library Journal* "A wonderful read." Nury Vittachi, *Hong Kong*; RTHK "Read All About It." "...an extraordinary gift for verisimilitude...Richly detailed and informed by fascinating characters, Lin's story is altogether a compelling and inspiring one that is sure to interest a wide range of readers." *Booklist*, starred review Lin, a former journalist, weaves the history of her family "through success and persecution, family relationships and separation" into the wider history of 19th- and 20th-century China, with a focus on the role and influence of Christianity. She begins with the conversion of her Chinese great-great-grandfather to Christianity and traces his descendants through her grandfather, a minister educated in the United States, and her father, a Philadelphia-based doctor. Lin's family story is unique, providing a view of recent and contemporary Chinese life that differs from the standard histories, and it's emotionally compelling, particularly when she describes the years Lin's father spent separated from his parents and siblings with little insight into their experiences of the Cultural Revolution and emigrating to the U.S. Lin writes with a novelist's narrative flair and grace and a historian's fine eye for detail, and as she sketches the personalities, dreams, and life circumstances of her relatives, her thorough research and compassion for her subjects are evident. Scholars and lay readers interested in China will enjoy this vital work. (*Publishers Weekly*, Starred Review) Some authors find the world in a teacup, but author Lin finds it, instead, in a single Chinese family, hers, the Lins, whose fortunes and religious evolution she follows over the course of five generations that, together, epitomize the rise of Christianity in China. A former reporter, Lin has done prodigious research to limn the history of her family and, by extension, that of China, too. She demonstrates an extraordinary gift for verisimilitude, bringing her material to vivid life as she begins her story in the last quarter of the nineteenth century with Old Lin, a fisherman-turned-cook for Anglican missionaries. From that humble beginning, the family's story is one of upward mobility. Old Lin's grandson and the author's grandfather, for example, attended the prestigious St. John's University in Shanghai on his way to becoming an academic, clergyman, and prolific writer; his brother-in-law Watchman Nee was an even more celebrated minister with a wide following. Together, the author argues, the two men built a religious foundation that "despite the terrible depredations of the Cultural Revolution" was sturdy enough to support the contemporary religious revival in China. Richly detailed and informed by fascinating characters, Lin's story is

altogether a compelling and inspiring one that is sure to interest a wide range of readers. (Booklist, Starred Review)

A Christian odyssey through three centuries of Chinese history. Family stories have a way of unfolding gradually, in bits and pieces, and former longtime Philadelphia Inquirer correspondent Lin's is no exception. The author grew up hearing occasional stories from her Shanghainese father, a preoccupied neurosurgeon, about his father, a minister, along with another relative, an uncle with the curious name of Watchman Nee, who was China's version of Billy Graham. Only after the post-Cultural Revolution détente were she and her family permitted to visit, and only then did the official repression of Chinese Christians begin to lift somewhat. Lin recounts the origins of the faith there with the arrival of European missionaries, their proselytizing coming at about the time that true opium, and not just that of the masses, was being imported in quantity and often leading to a view among Chinese that there should be no distinction between missionary and merchant. In later years, writes the author, the communist state attempted to co-opt Christian churches with state-appointed clerics, when it wasn't outright persecuting Christians to begin with. Lin traces the story of her family's increasing involvement with organized Christianity over the years, finally leading to Watchman Nee, who early on in the communist era was accused of espionage and being an economic criminal because of his family's bourgeois pharmaceutical business. By Lin's account, he did what he could to work within the boundaries of the state's evolving religious policy, sometimes, Lin reports, coyly. The author's portraits of family members and other Shanghainese and their many difficulties during the worst years of the repression are affecting. As for the state of Christianity in China now, she expresses guarded optimism; though Watchman Nee's works are still banned, she writes that one pastor told her the old repression would be impossible because there are too many believers. An useful, interesting book for students of modern Chinese history and of missionary Christianity. (Kirkus)

Through exhaustive research and primary interviews, Lin debuts with this fascinating story of her family, uncovering her paternal side's lengthy adherence to the Christian faith. Born and raised in Philadelphia, Lin grew up knowing little about her relatives in China. However, as she grew older and became more aware of the tribulations of her Chinese relatives, she decided to delve into this history, exploring revelations of both a personal and spiritual nature. China's tumultuous last two centuries witnessed the rise of imperialism, burgeoning nationalism (accompanied with xenophobia), and recent communism (the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76 saw even further measures taken against foreign beliefs and systems). Yet, the deeply planted seed of Christian faith remained strong and flourished within Lin's family. Interviewing her distant kin was often a

challenge as many were uncomfortable talking about past troubles. Consequently, this work is an intriguing interlocution between memory and fact. VERDICT Lin's family serves as an apt proxy for all Chinese Christians whose faith endured during a time of great censure. This book serves as a solid primer on the subject as there have been few books which have examined this little known history. (Library Journal) This panoramic, true story spans thousands of miles, about 160 years, two continents, and myriad cultural upheavals and human lives. But Jennifer Lin's Shanghai Faithful would not glow as it does unless it were so well told. . . . Shanghai Faithful lives, with people you care about, consequences that hurt, real tension and relief. . . . To paraphrase Desmond Tutu, there is no future without forgiveness. Note that word in the subtitle of this grand book, a word that reminds us, on a huge scale, of what faith can do for people and what people will do for faith. (The Philadelphia Inquirer) [Shanghai Faithful: Betrayal and Forgiveness in a Chinese Christian Family] is a compelling narrative covering five generations of the Lin family in China.

(Catholic Philly.com) Lin's book helps explain what shaped the mentality of Chinese Christians.... Anyone interested in modern Chinese (Christian) history, society, and culture and seeks to grasp what shaped the Chinese mentality in general must read this family odyssey. For Lin, her family lineage and her 'distance' from China, makes her the ideal author to present a precise and valuable addition to the study of Chinese Christian theology in twentieth century. (Reading Religion) If you are at all interested in the historical development of the church in China, this book is a must-read. (ChinaSource) Jennifer Lin, in her moving family history, Shanghai Faithful, uses the experiences of her grandfather, Rev Lin Pu-chi, to recount the extraordinary route Christianity took over five generations, from remote missionary churches in the 19th century to cosmopolitan Shanghai in the 1930s and right up to and past the Cultural Revolution. There are stories of oppression and courage, but also a rueful sense of opportunities lost, of a liberal and humane community persecuted and ultimately exiled for their beliefs. (Irish Times) As someone who knew little to nothing about Chinese history, I found Shanghai Faithful to be extremely comprehensible with beautiful imagery. The author creates a family timeline that connects perfectly with the historical background.... Shanghai Faithful is both an educational and invigorating read.... [I]t's an impressive compilation of one family's stories, which represent the struggles faced by thousands of Christian families in China. (WPSU's BookMark) Only an experienced and dogged journalist like Jennifer could possibly investigate and write such a thoroughly gripping historical personal narrative. I was with her every step of the wayâ "not just because my parents were born in the Shanghai area but because I shared with her so very much. You must join her for this worthwhile journey! (Connie Chung, television journalist) Through her own family history, Jennifer Lin has authored a beautifully

written elegy to that generation of foreign-educated, humanist, and often Christian Chinese who had begun to form a cosmopolitan class in China that was comfortable on both sides of the East/West divide and might have successfully led China from its cultural traditionalism into modernity. Instead, this class was savagely persecuted and then erased by Mao and his revolution, thus creating tens of thousands of family stories as heartrendingly tragic as this one. At the same time, China was denied a whole generation of its best-educated and most able professionals, teachers, scientists, businessmen, artists, and leaders, creating a national tragedy of such titanic proportions that the country has still not recovered from it. (Orville Schell, director, Center on US-China Relations, Asia Society)

This masterful biography is a loving and skillfully written portrait of the Lin family, spanning five generations. The author also provides an authentic survey of the historical events that overtook the family members during these decades. I recommend this book highly for both the novice and the "old China hand." (Daniel Bays, professor emeritus, Calvin College, and author of *A New History of Christianity in China*)

Jennifer Lin has written a dramatic, wide-ranging history of modern China, focusing on the lives of her grandfather and his brother-in-law, Watchman Nee, to explain how Western Christianity became a Chinese religion. Her riveting account of their trials and tribulations offers an illuminating perspective on China's ongoing struggle to create a new national and cultural identity. Scholars as well as general readers interested in religion, politics, and the history of China's relations with the United States will find Lin's story full of valuable insights. (Terry Lautz, Harvard-Yenching Institute, and author of *John Birch: A Life*)

In revealing the truth of how her family helped spread Christianity in China, Jennifer Lin weaves a captivating, poignant story about the nature and power of belief. This epic study shows the high price that can be paid by those who insist on holding fast to faith and family at a time when everything is at risk. (Jeff Gammage, author of *China Ghosts: My Daughter's Journey to America, My Passage to Fatherhood*)

This engrossing book offers rich insights on faith and loyalty in a Christian family in Shanghai. Jennifer Lin's compelling narrative, often immensely emotional, will be of great interest for anyone who wishes to know about the everyday struggles of Chinese Christians as they endured persecution and suffering during the most hostile years of Mao's rule. (Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, Pace University)

Capturing the epic sweep of a turbulent Chinese century through a personal lens, Jennifer Lin tells a poignant, riveting, and deeply researched tale of her family's journey of faith, from the nineteenth-century Chinese villager who first encountered Western missionaries to the twentieth-century Christian leaders "one working within the system and one pushing for something new. Persecuted under Communist rule, each left a mark still felt in China today, where ever more people seek something to believe in. (Mary Kay Magistad, creator and host

of "Whose Century Is It?" podcast, former NPR and PRI China correspondent) *Shanghai Faithful* is an extraordinary book based on thorough research and an intensely personal quest for understanding. Jennifer Lin's family history is vividly told and packed with insights. It provides a unique window into the complicated and often painful history of Protestant Christianity in modern China. Her account traces the Chinese Christian experience across five generations, from early missionary encounters through the nationalist currents of the 1920s and the attacks on Christianity during the Maoist decades. It centers around the figures of her grandparents, the Anglican minister Lin Pu-chi and his wife Ni Guizhen, the sister of the influential Chinese indigenous church leader Watchman Nee (Ni Tuosheng). I have learned much from reading this gripping and deeply moving book. (Ryan Dunch, University of Alberta)

*Shanghai Faithful* is an extraordinary story about a family in a rapidly changing world. Its wide-ranging narrative links family members on two continents and covers more than a century of tumultuous change. Lin's research is meticulous and combines archival precision, sophisticated historiographical framing, and memorable storytelling. I will surely be assigning *Shanghai Faithful* in my own teaching, because its story brings to life a remarkable era in Chinese, American, and global history. (Robert Andr   LaFleur, Beloit College)

One of the most impressive books I've read in a long time. [Jennifer Lin] is an incredible writer. . . . I couldn't put it down! (Hank Hanegraaff, the Bible Answer Man)

In this deeply researched, vividly written history, a veteran journalist puts her investigative skills to work uncovering her family's hidden past. Her multigenerational saga is also a microcosm of China's turbulent, transformative history from imperialism, nationalism, and communism, through to its present role as an economic superpower, captured from the unique perspective of a Chinese Christian family. When, in 1979, Jennifer Lin accompanied her father back to China for the first time in thirty years, it was like stepping into the last page of a mystery without having read any of the book. Her relatives were thrilled to be reunited with their long-lost family, but too stoic and often too frightened to stir up stories from a painful, politically dangerous past. Jennifer, however, was determined to find out what had gone before and in the course of a career that afforded her a deep engagement with China and equipped her with the skills and doggedness to unearth even the most carefully buried truths, she has pieced together an extraordinary tale. Moreover, she discovered that the saga of her family is, as she writes, "the very story of China, one that captures the collision of religion and politics that began more than a century ago and continues to this day."

Jennifer Lin is an award-winning journalist and former reporter for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. In a distinguished thirty-year career, she served as the paper's New York financial correspondent,

Washington foreign affairs reporter, and Asia bureau chief, based in China.

You can tell a lot of research went into this, but it still manages to have a captivating narrative "just like that Hamilton book that Chernow wrote. Someone tell Lin-Manuel Miranda to write a musical about Shanghai Faithful next!

The story of Jennifer Lin's family is compelling. I just could not put this book down. Not only did I learn so much about the history of China but Jennifer's style of writing creates vivid pictures in the reader's mind of what was happening on a very personal level. One does not need to be Christian to LOVE this book.

I really enjoyed this very much. The author's father was 2-3 years behind me at St John's. All the people in the book are familiar to me especially the mother who goes to the Little Flock on Har Doon road. We even invited one of the ministers, Lee, a dentist, who came to St John's to give a talk to group of Christians. We called ourselves the Redeem group. Every Sunday we went for to the Little Flock church to hear whoever was preaching. We didn't know the name Watchman Nee. It made me recall my own days in Shanghai. ( R. Yuan, Newton. MA)

The author, Jennifer Lin, seems to have spent a lifetime researching her family history in China, so every page contains revelations from a lost world. And yet the themes she teases out--political upheaval, familial devotion and rebellion, the role of faith in life, the emergence of modern China--are locked into today's world as well. There is also the slow reveal of the personalities and influences that produced the modern world, both as we live it geopolitically today, and as Lin lives it herself as a first generation Chinese-Italian American. If ever there was an argument that we're all one human family, this book is it. Can't wait to read what she does with the Italian side of her family. I guess that will be the companion volume? Hope so.

Personal history at its best. A must read. Thank you Jennifer Lin for sharing these stories about your family. No one would know unless you wrote it down for us. To have your freedom of religion taken away, and surviving the test of one's faith is something that I've not had to endure.

Sometimes books written by news reporters are somewhat dry, "just the facts" sorts of affairs. That couldn't be further from the truth for Shanghai Faithful. This is a thoroughly engrossing, enchantingly



written story about the cultural revolution, religious persecution and one family's legacy. Ms. Lin's style leads you on to the next chapter, making you anxious to see what's next. Her additions of conversational dialogue interspersed with extremely well researched factual information make it seem as if you are reading excellent fiction, yet the story is true. I am not Christian. I am not Chinese. It doesn't matter. Read this book for the sheer joy of storytelling and history.

What a remarkable story. I learned so much about the early Christian missionaries and how they influenced China. Following the Lin family history you felt like you were seeing Christianity unfolding in China and how much it has affected Chinese culture in the past and through present times. Even though Christianity is a central theme to this book it's more about her personal family and how each member lived through such tumultuous historical times. It was very engaging and enlightening.

Jennifer Lin's compelling tale of how her family endured persecution under Mao will attract readers for many reasons. The author paints a rich picture of China in many eras. She leads us through the rise of Christianity there and the perception in the minds of some Chinese people that this new religion was just another British import that would damage this Asian nation as opium had. Lin's ability to connect these dots and weave them into the tale of her family's role in spreading Christianity through China draws readers into a fascinating land where culture and behavior shifted dramatically under Mao. The author depicts the details of her relatives lives there in minute detail, from the spare furnishings in their homes to the health problems they suffered as their relatives were tortured for being Christian. A former journalist, Lin spent years living in and traveling to China to document her family's story. Her hard work pays off in a suspenseful tale full of revelations. Readers will never forget, for example, how one of her cousins endured ritual slapping at the hands of fellow students for playing classical piano. This is a wonderful read for anyone interested in China, Christianity, Mao or just in a well-told story of the ability of humans to survive.

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