

The Jesus Family in Communist China - Part 2

by Dr. D. Vaughan Rees

Dr. D. Vaughan Rees explores the impactful lives of the Jesus Family leaders in Communist China and their contributions to faith and community.

Scripture: Matthew 6:10, Acts 20:24, 1 Corinthians 1:27, Galatians 3:24, Ephesians 5:25

Topics: "Christian Persecution", "Faith Leaders"

Description

Dr. D. Vaughan Rees preaches about the four spiritual leaders of the Ye-Su Chia-ting, highlighting Mr. Ching-tien-yin, Mr. Tung-heng-shin, Dr. Bessie Chen, and Miss Helen Tso. These leaders exemplify different aspects of faith, sacrifice, and dedication to God's work, showcasing the transformative power of Christ in their lives. Their stories reflect the challenges, conversions, and unwavering commitment to spreading the Gospel in China, despite opposition and personal struggles. Through their leadership, they demonstrate the unity in Christ that transcends worldly differences and the profound impact of surrendering to God's will.

Transcript

The Leaders

of the Ye-su Chia-ting

There are four spiritual leaders of the Ye-Su Chia-ting, two men and two women: Mr. Ching-tien-yin, Mr. Tung-heng-shin, Dr. Bessie Chen and Miss Helen Tso. One of the Chia-ting hymns has something to say about leadership. Here is the translation:

Love is the organizing principle of the Home of Jesus. This is heavenly conception, and man had small part in its growth. Since we are fathers and sons by grace and brothers in the Spirit, leadership is weak and bodily life is very strong. All are "one in Christ," whether old or young, male or female, dull or gifted. All worldly differences are ignored, tribe or nation, rich or poor, honourable or lowly. Truly our aim is, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will on earth be done."

I experienced the truth of the line, "Leadership is weak and bodily life is very strong." Mr. Ching, though he is the founder of the movement and a recognized spiritual leader, was not the leader where the authorities were concerned. During the two years I was in MaChuang Mr. Chow-shin-ming p36 was the leader in this respect, and Mr. Chuin-hsiang was his assistant.

MR. CHING-TIEN-YIN

Mr. Ching was born in Shantung about the year 1890 and was given the name Tien-yin. His early life was spent under the tutelage of his father, who was a Chinese medical practitioner and an ardent Confucianist. Confucianists have a misty knowledge of one true God, whom they call Shang-Ti. When the boy Tien-yin was about eight or nine years old, he made a vow to Shang-Ti that he was determined to know him better. About the first year of the Republic (circ. 1910), he went to a Methodist school in Tai-an because there was no better school in the district.

Both he and his father were opposed to Christianity. He was the oldest in his class. One day the teacher proposed that he should be their representative. He accepted. Then came the day when someone suggested that since he was the leader, he ought to be baptized. His Confucian principles of rectitude accepted this, and although he was still strongly opposed to Christianity he agreed. Of all non-Christian religions Confucianism has produced the best civilization. Its ethics are better than those of Hinduism, Buddhism, or Mohammedanism, and there is none of the debasement of womanhood one finds in these religions.

If, for instance, a Chinese takes a concubine, the first wife never loses her right or position. She is always the head of the household and the one respected and obeyed. Chinese women are the basis of Chinese life. Communism is ruining what was China's mainstay. p37 Young Tien-yin, having been baptized, was now in an equivocal position, which has to be clarified. The test was not long in coming, for workers were needed in a Methodist church function. Only Christians were eligible.

Those in the class who were Christians were asked to stand. Young Tien-yin stood. The die was cast. He saw that he must believe in Jesus, or he was not "treading the path of rectitude," a phrase constantly used in the Confucian classics. Thus did Confucius become his schoolmaster to lead him to Christ, that he might be "justified by faith" (Gal. 3:24). He began to study the Bible closely, and in his testimony to the Communists he says, that as he read, he saw that Jesus was greater than Confucius and the only Saviour of the world, "for He died on the cross for my sins."

A further crisis in his life was now reached, for when he thought to know more of this Jesus and to follow Him, his conscience began to trouble him, for he was divorced. Several years before he had sent his wife back to her mother's home. "She had bound feet, and was not my equal, so I thought; and I didn't love her," he told me once, when he was giving me an account of his early life. The next step in his eventful history was to find out what the Bible had to say about divorce.

He turned to Ephesians 5:25, and found, "Husbands love your wives." He expected that the passage would add, "if they are pretty or clever or good." But no, there was the bald statement, and nothing more. He shut the Book, for it did not answer his difficulty in the way he wanted it to. Next day he did the same thing, still half hoping and expecting to find the words he wanted. On several occasions he did this; and then finally he gave in. He dropped on his p38 IMAGE

knees and prayed, "God, if you have commanded me to love my wife, I must be able to and I will." On his knees he promised that he would go to her village and bring her home the next day. Since she had bound feet, she could not walk the fifteen miles to his home. It was necessary for him to find a conveyance. There was none available not even a barrow. When he told me this, he added that in later life he has always been surprised that he didn't think to himself? "O God, now that I have made such a sacrifice, and done Such a big thing for You, You might have made it easy for p39 me and prepared a barrow." But all he

thought of was that he must keep his promise.

After putting the situation to his wife he did an impossible thing for a Chinese to do. He put her on his back and carried her home. As soon as they entered the door of his home together the Holy Spirit descended on them both. This was in 1920. In 1940 I received a broken hearted letter from him. His beloved wife was dead. She had proved his equal and beloved companion for twenty years. Contrary to his former opinion, she was the backbone of the work which had started in 1921.

At that time Mr. Ching and his wife had sold all their possessions and had given them to the poor. With a few who were like-minded he and his wife commenced a co-operative store, then silk-weaving, and then a chapel was built on the land he had given to the Lord. This formed the nucleus of the work, and farming was commenced.

The piece of land which is the centre of this work was the one which Mr. Ching's great-grandfather had had to buy. It is so essentially suitable in every way, that it is clear that God was preparing His vessel more than a hundred years earlier.

During the early 30's, Mr. Ching and his companions took evangelistic tours all over North China, In 1935, my wife and I met them for the first time in South Kansu, more than a thousand miles from where the work first began.

Repeatedly Mr. Ching said to me, "The China Inland Mission is our mother and father (as he expressed it in his Chinese idiom). It was from The Life of Hudson Taylor, by Mrs. H. Taylor, in its Chinese translation that I received my first stimulus to preach the Gospel to my fellow Chinese. p40 Here I caught a glimpse of what self-sacrifice really means."

MR. TUNG-HENG-SHIN

Mr. Ching's constant companion on his preaching tours was Mr. Tung-heng-shin. He was the Charles Wesley of the Home of Jesus. How marvellously God selects His workers! Without Heng-shin the work which Mr. Ching has done would scarcely have been possible. How can a church be formed without hymns? Under Heng-shin's leadership these Chinese churches were full of song, the sweetest singing imaginable. And so these two were the Spiritual descendants of John and Charles Wesley, Moody and Sankey, Chapman and Alexander.

Have you ever heard of a church congregation at home singing the Hallelujah Chorus of Handel's Messiah in parts? At Christmas, 1948, Heng-shin was conducting the MaChuang choir when, just as they were about to sing the Hallelujah Chorus, he turned around to the congregation, divided them according to their voices into bass, tenor, alto, and soprano, and they sang the "Hallelujahs" in parts. I first found out Heng-shin's gifts by accident, one day when I was in an American hospital in Central China.

While convalescing I was the doctor's guest; I was laboriously strumming out some birdcalls on the piano in his drawing room. Some musical genius has set the wonderful songbirds of China to music. Heng-shin was standing by, no doubt pained at my clumsy efforts. To my surprise he asked for a try, I did not then know what ability the Chinese had, as I knew it subsequently. All the birds of the Chinese bush and moorland came into that missionary drawing-room. Have you ever listened to a p41 recording of birds in an English coppice?

Chinese birds can be just as sweet. It was to Heng-shin that this Chinese indigenous church owed its ever-increasing stock of hymns. It is good to see that he is not alone in this, for song is breaking out from hearts that have been dumb for centuries. Jazz and syncopation are no new thing; they killed music in China. (I have heard an old Chinese teacher, an M.A., deplore the fact that Chinese music is not what it was in the time of Confucius. He knew this because Confucius was a musician and wrote about music).

Heathen music is full of jazz. These Chinese Christians will have none of it. I often listened with delight to Heng-shin's rendering of the Magnificat -- his own composition. But he was not always like this! Opium smuggling was once his occupation. He was a constant traveller between Nanking and Shansi. He substituted a smaller container for the usual large one in his thermos flask. It was easy for him to fill the large cavity left with opium. He went back and forth with impunity and was never caught.

If he had been it would have meant his death -- such was the penalty inflicted by General Yen-shi-shan's government. He told me that he had repeatedly reproached himself for thus risking his life, but had never succeeded in stopping it until he became a Christian. Then Christ stopped it for him. After his conversion he became the leader of Governor Yen's brass band. But Christ called, and he entered the Baptist seminary in Kaifeng, where he became song leader. There he met Mr.

Ching and gave his life to the evangelization of China. The secret of the great change in his life, he told me, was the filling of the Holy Spirit. That is doubtless the origin of p42 Heng-shin's wisdom in dealing with truculent Communists and their questions. He has been in gaol, and has been near death several times. Gaol and death have been the lot of many of these Christian brethren. He is thoroughly Chinese in thought, and is only second to Mr. Ching in his knowledge of the Classics and the ancient wisdom of China.

These things the Communists now despise. He frequently corrects the poor literary style of local Communist documents, since he is in charge of all the outside relationships. When I was in Tsinan, and we were both standing in the presence of a young Communist commissar, he utterly non-plussed those gathered around by correcting the dossier they had made of my doings. He was dressed like a coolie, and they naturally thought his mental accomplishments were in keeping with his dress.

This wisdom of his replies filled me with admiration. The commissar spoke contemptuously of this "foreign religion," and asked how much the Ye-su Chia-ting received from abroad. Heng-shin denied that there was any financial help or connexion whatever, but added, "There is a very close spiritual relationship. We love them and they love us." Then he told the following story: "When you Communists were in charge of our district last year, some of your soldiers came to our village to buy vegetables.

Planes flew over, and there was danger of their seeing us, so I asked the soldiers to take cover. 'Oh, they won't bomb you,' said the sergeant, 'those are English-American planes, and they know you are one of their churches.' I said nothing; what was the use? -- for I knew that he would not believe. Some time p43 later you were driven out, and I was arrested by the Nationalists for harbouring your soldiers. I was brought before their colonel on a capital charge. His secretary recognized me and said behind his hand, 'Say you are an English-American church and you will be let free immediately.'

I said nothing. I was not executed, though for sometime it was threatened. The Lord intervened when my execution was imminent." The Communist was silent but I could see he was very impressed. Sometime later Heng-shin was with me on Tai-shen Mountain, a desolate mountain which these people are transforming; I asked him about some big foundations. "Oh, those," he said, "those are of houses for tired

missionaries to live in, when they come up here for a holiday." It was their intention to give holidays free of charge to tired or sick missionaries, but unfortunately these plans have fallen through. Nevertheless, "it was good that it was in thine heart." DR. BESSIE CHEN

As leaders of the women's work God has raised up two ladies. The lives of these two are so interwoven that they can be scarcely separated.

They were both working in the Peking School of Midwifery when the Lord called them. Dr. Chen was in the department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, and Helen Tso was a teacher in the school. They were both accomplished young ladies, and were noted in the social life of Peking, especially in its dancing salons; both were prominent in skating and sport.

Dr. Bessie came from a wealthy Hankow family; both her mother's and father's families were Christians for two generations.

When she decided that she was going to study medicine, she was by no means a keen Christian; in fact, she doubted if she was even converted. An application for entry into the Peking Union Medical College was rejected on health grounds, although she had passed the entrance examination.

Hong Kong was her next thought, but for this she not only had to do her medical course in English, but also had to undergo the stiffest of competitive examinations. Of the several hundred candidates in Hankow she took first place, the only one who was admitted to the Hong Kong University from that city. Her mother's great hope was that she should do postgraduate work in Obstetrics and Gynaecology in England.

The Lord had other plans, and her medical work became a sideline to the women's evangelistic work she and Helen Tso conducted in many parts of China.

MISS HELEN TSO

Miss Helen Tso's ancestors on both sides had been officials under the Manchu dynasty. Her father was a man of such rectitude that in the era of corruption under the war-lords (1910-1930) the famous General Wu-pei-fu visited their home, after her father had retired in dismay, and personally begged him to take office again. What she told me of her home life reminded me of the descriptions of the official Chinese home of the eighteenth century. (An excellent account of this period is given in *Hong-leo-meng*, a Chinese novel written just before Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and others were writing the first novels in English, and written in much the same style). _ The members of her family, a large one, were all strict Confucianists.

Her grandfather had warned them that should any of them become Christians, their names would be erased from the family register, and they themselves would be outcasts from the family clan, which was a serious matter for the ancestor-worshipping Chinese. In spite of the family's attitude Helen was sent to a Presbyterian ladies' school, the most exclusive in Peking. It shows what value was placed on missionary schools. There she received a Christian training, the influence of which never left her.

For some years she remained outwardly the same, until one night, she was invited to a little mission hall in Peking. She and Bessie went together. Here they were both converted and, as she says, baptized in the Holy Spirit amid floods of tears, which at the time surprised her, and for which she could give no adequate explanation. A revival spread through the school of Midwifery, and a group of young Chinese women, of

whom Bessie and Helen were the leaders, banded themselves together to preach the Gospel and heal the sick in Mongolia, That young ladies of the calibre of this group should give up everything at the call of Christ was something new in Peking social and educational circles.

Every obstacle that man's craft could devise was used to obstruct their going. A telegram from the Minister of Education in Nanking was sent to reinforce the pleading of their college superintendent. This having failed, lawyers were then employed to intimidate them, and the old Chinese pastor, who had been the means of their conversion, was put into prison on a false charge. p46 There was a very big stir, and this old gentleman had to take the blame. At his trial, of course, nothing could be proved against him, and he was freed.

He then volunteered to go with them to Mongolia, and eventually on the border of Inner Mongolia they established midwifery clinics. Having established their base, they then travelled far and wide, attending to needy women. They had much difficulty in obtaining a permanent building; for some time all that was available to them was half of a large building used as a brothel. Then began the most difficult period of all. Their relatives began to arrive begging them to return. Nothing could describe the horror with which these relatives viewed the surroundings in which these girls were living and working for Christ's sake, Church leaders from various parts of China followed, including one from Hong Kong, to see and persuade Dr.

Bessie. "But the most difficult one to encounter of all those who came," said Miss Tso, in recounting their adventures to me, "was my own dear father. Little did I guess what the outcome would be," she added. This Proud Confucian official, her father, was so impressed by what he saw, that there and then began the work which in the end led him to give his heart to "Him who is greater than Confucius." It was in this region that they met Mr. Ching and his companion, Mr. Tung, who were traveling up to the North-West to preach.

The young women then divided; half went on with Mr. Ching, and half stayed to carry on the work in Inner Mongolia. Part of this Journey took them through the Gobi desert. p47 In Ning-hsia the hand of one of the young ladies was sought by the brutal Moslem governor, Ma-pu-fang. Her refusal awoke his anger, and she even suffered imprisonment at his hands. There she contracted tuberculosis and eventually died. Helen and Bessie buried her not far from the place she had sought to evangelize.

In 1934 they arrived in Lanchow, now Kaolan, in Kansu, and there for the first time my wife and I met Dr. Bessie, Helen and Heng-shin. How glad I would be to write biographies of young women like these -- of those who have laid down their lives, and those who are about to do so, in the cause of the evangelization of China and its women!" Dr. Bessie Chen's time is now fully occupied with medical duties among the mothers and children at the Homes of Jesus. But she finds time to do much translation from English into Chinese.

Her literary Chinese finds much praise even from Mr. Ching, and he will pass nothing second rate. I watched them together translate, "Full Salvation," and some of Wesley's hymns, such as, "And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Saviour's blood ?" Miss Helen Tso's great ability and energy take her into every department of these Homes. Four months after I had applied for a Communist pass out of China, it was suddenly granted. When I originally made the application, I mentioned to Helen that I had no foreign clothes, and that if the Communists allowed me to go, I could scarcely go abroad in Chinese dress.

She told me not to worry, took a tape out of her pocket and measured me. I asked her if she had ever made a foreign suit. The reply was, "No," but that she had some pictures from which she might be able to manage something. p48 I wasn't very sanguine. When the pass was granted I suddenly thought of my

clothes. My anxiety was unnecessary. The day before my departure Helen arranged all the necessary clothes for packing, three foreign suits and a foreign overcoat, with shirts and ties to match, also socks and shoes.

Later I found a handkerchief of the right shade neatly placed into the breast pocket of the blue serge suit. "What will the Communists say when they examine my baggage, and see all these fine suits?" I inquired. She replied that all the material had come from Chinese gowns, which had not been used for some years. Their owners had discarded them for poorer clothing on entering the Home of Jesus. The overcoat is a masterpiece; it is lined with astrakhan, and has a fur collar. It is rather too ornate to wear at home, as it also has an inside silk covering, similar to the best-tailored Chinese coats.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/dr-d-vaughan-rees/the-jesus-family-in-communist-china-part-2/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net