

The Jesus Family in Communist China - Part 4

by Dr. D. Vaughan Rees

Dr. D. Vaughan Rees shares powerful testimonies of faith and transformation among Christians in Communist China, highlighting their resilience and dedication to Christ amidst persecution.

Scripture: Genesis 29:11, Psalm 139:12, Daniel 3:17, Matthew 11:28, Matthew 20:16, Mark 9:35, James 5:16

Topics: "Faith And Perseverance", "Christian Persecution"

Description

Dr. D. Vaughan Rees preaches about the remarkable incidents from the life of the Ye-Su Chia-ting, showcasing the power of faith, honesty, and transformation through encounters with Jesus. The testimonies include miraculous interventions in trials, conversions from opium addiction and idol worship, dreams guiding acts of kindness, and the impact of unwavering faith in the face of Communist opposition. These stories illustrate the unwavering dedication, sacrificial service, and profound spiritual experiences of the early Chinese Christians amidst challenging circumstances.

Transcript

Incidents from the life of the Je-Su Chia-ting I heard this testimony from the chapel platform in MaChuang. The wife of the leader involved was speaking. She said: "The leader of our church, my husband, was to have a village trial for harbouring Nationalist soldiers. He was already in gaol. These trials invariably end in a horrible death. He was to be buried alive, and he was not guilty, for the soldiers were fleeing and had forced us to allow them to sleep in the chapel. All was ready, the stage set, and the judge and accusers had arrived.

"The day before the trial, several of us were together in the chapel praying for my husband, when a chicken came in and laid an egg. It made such a noise that it disturbed our prayers, so I got up and caught it and, little thinking of the result of my action, tied a note and some money to the chicken's leg to pay for the egg. An hour or so later, the landlady of the village inn came down the street followed by a gentleman. A crowd was following. The landlady simply p72 said, 'These are the Christians,' and withdrew.

"The gentleman said he was the Communist judge and asked, 'Did you write this note?' 'I said, 'Yes,' for it was the note I had tied to the hen's leg. "'Did you tie this ten cents to the hen's leg?' "Again I said, 'Yes.' "'That hen belonged to the landlady of the inn where I am staying.' He then asked us of our beliefs, and the reason for this uncommon and exceptional act. With great simplicity he said, 'Such honesty I have not seen before. How did you become like this?' We told him of Jesus.

The upshot was that there was no trial the next day; it was quashed by the moved and amazed judge." While I was working in the hospital, Christians were being "registered" by the Communists. An old countryman was called. He had been well coached beforehand by his pastor, as had others; they were Presbyterians. When it came to the point he refused all advice and said he would reply to the Communist's questioning as the Lord gave him utterance at that moment. "What has Christianity done for you?2" asked the Communist official.

"Made me a better man," replied the old farmer. "Is this so?" he asked the assembled villagers. This was a public trial. There was a very emphatic, "Yes," from those assembled. It was reported that his farm used to be the dirtiest and worst in their village and now it was the best. "How did this happen?" "I was a drunkard and an opium smoker, nothing could p73 rid me of those two vices, and my farm had been brought to ruin. But I accepted Jesus as my Saviour, and He changed me.

He enabled me to break with both opium and drink. My fellow villagers can now testify to these things and my farm is now the best. Ask them." This is the sort of reply with which the Communists cannot deal. Here is another testimony told in the chapel at MaChuang, while I was present: "I had a dream and told it to my husband when I woke. In my dream I was in a village about forty li [About 14 1/2 miles] away, I saw a man and his wife preparing breakfast. All they had in the big pot was grass and leaves.

"I said to my husband: 'Meo-meo village has turned to the Lord and started a Chia-ting. You must take them some grain.' "How do you know?' he asked. I told him my dream. He started out immediately with two sacks of grain on each side of his wheelbarrow, and some bean-curd to sell for incidental expenses. Money was not used along the road he took and so he bartered the bean-curd for rice bowls and chop-sticks. On arrival he found things just as I had dreamed. The Holy Spirit had fallen on the man and his wife, and they had given all they had to the poor.

My husband gave them the grain for their breakfast, and bowls and chop-sticks as well. There was a feast of joy in which the neighbours joined; many immediately turned to the Lord, when they saw the grace that was given." This is the power of the early church! What can stop it? p74 And what a Chinese flavour it all has! An influential member of the Ye-Su Chia-ting is Pastor Chow, and he is the only one I have heard addressed by his title. He is an ordained Presbyterian minister.

His wife's great sorrow was that she was childless. If any one doubts the story of Sarah's suggestion to Abraham then they need doubt no longer. The pastor had repeatedly rejected his wife's suggestion that he should take another wife. In this he differed from Abraham. Pastor Chow remained deaf to his wife's suggestions. He is the leader of the young people's parties as they go out evangelizing, for his chief work has been building up bodies of isolated and distant believers.

Up to the time when I left, his work was still being carried on, and possibly may still be, for these people have so amazed their Communist rulers that anything is possible. When the pastor's work of preaching and teaching was finished, I frequently found him alone in the cotton field tending the plants or picking the cotton. Possibly it was his time and place for meditation. The Communists had their spies everywhere. I was told by a commissar as he took out a sheaf of papers referring to me, how many times I had been seen working in the fields.

"It's all in your dossier," he said. In these Homes there is always a bustle of many comings and goings -- conferences, study circles, choir practices, new believers arriving and introducing themselves and being attended to. Classes including Bible study are continuous, and all branches of technical work from

horticulture to building are taught. In the midst of all this activity is the constant sound of singing, for choir gatherings are frequent, p75 IMAGE

and spontaneous singing is heard everywhere. I met many university graduates among them. One day quite a noted lawyer put down his buckets of dung for a chat. It sometimes seemed as though the more menial the work, the higher was the spiritual status of the one who did it: "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all" (Mark 9:35). This is not just one more passage of Scripture with them, but something to be obeyed, a command and a stimulus.

I watched with interest the departure of young married couples to assist in the work in newly opened villages. Only newly married couples were sent. It will be a long time before I forget the departure of Chuin-hsiang and his wife to initiate work in Hankow. This was immediately after it had been captured by the Communists p76 from the Nationalists. This young man was a Peking University Science graduate. He and his wife proposed to start the work in Hankow by peddling bean-curd from door to door.

Their missionary equipment consisted of what they could carry in their hands. As a student he was an atheist. After his graduation he went home for a holiday. His home was in Shantung, not far from MaChuang, the headquarters of the Chia-ting. He arrived home and found all his relatives ashamed and horror-struck because his sister was, as they said, demon-possessed. He scouted the idea, fortified as he was with the assurance of his Western learning. Scornful of the ignorance of his relatives, he went in to see his sister.

She was sitting in a daze and he could scarcely recognize her. His pretty, vivacious sister of a year ago now looked like a senseless old crone. Suddenly to his astonishment and fear a man's voice spoke with her lips, while her face was agonized and convulsed. They called in necromancers, but their incantations were powerless. The voice taunted them, saying that the only one he feared was Jesus. The pastor and some other Christians came. They prayed, and then in the name of Jesus commanded the demon to come out of her.

The man's voice replied, "I'll go," and then again, "I'll go," but fainter; then a series, "I'll go, I'll go, I'll . . ." until the voice was lost in the distance. When Chuin-hsiang told me the story, he added, "My sister was well from that hour, and I became a Christian from that hour." On my arrival in MaChuang I was given a young man as a valet by the name of Ching-ts'ong. His wife had been brought up in a Christian family; she was a dear girl named p77 Leah, and a very clever nurse.

She nearly always came out top in the examinations held among the nursing staff. These were really tests held by the nursing staff among themselves and supervised by those in charge. These two, Ching-ts'ong and his wife, gave me the most faithful service all the time I was with them. He did the most menial jobs for me, jobs which I never asked of him. When I thanked him he told me straight out that being thanked rather dulled the keen edge of his service for the Lord. I gradually learned that this was not simply a gesture, but a real attitude deeply seated in his spiritual life.

Such a revolution in one's foreign way of thinking is not easily come by. But it indicates what a missionary to the "heathen" has to contend with. In spite of myself, I did as he suggested, and thanked God instead for his faithful service. He told me that his work was his only method of preaching, and so he was surprised that I had pressed the matter of the thanks. Just after my arrival, since he had been allocated to me, I called him. He "waited not upon the order" of his coming, but came running at once.

I wondered to myself, if after a few months, he would run like that. He served me all the two years I was there, and to the last day he never changed. I cannot but testify to this and glorify God for His grace in that young man. Another young fellow, named Hu-chao, whose responsibility was the fowls and rabbits, was on his way to the university when the Lord called him -- he had just matriculated. His chicken coops were sanded and limed every day; with glass in their roofs they were well-aired and lighted. They had been built by him and an older man, and were a constant source of comment by the Communists. p78 IMAGE

Love of his charges entered into his work, for one day I caught him silently weeping over some of his rabbits which had died. Another of those whose work testified for them was an older brother named Ru-shun. He had had a mechanical p79 training, but live things interested him more. He it was who put the hens' eggs in the rooks' nests. Three weeks later he climbed the elms and brought down the fluffy yellow chicks. We all laughed at the shock these little changelings must have caused their black foster-parents.

Beside these living incubators, he had others which he had built himself. From these he brought out hundreds of chickens, geese and ducks in a year. His were also the pigeon lofts, from which I had many a tasty meal. His fancy pigeons interested me immensely -- most of them were unknown to me -- pouters, fantails, and others of which I knew only the Chinese name. The Forestry Department had as its head, a graduate of Nanking University. He seemed to know all about tree culture and was a most interesting conversationalist.

Transplanting, pruning, grafting and tree surgery were his specialties. They could transplant trees large enough to need twenty or thirty men to carry them. I saw a whole row of large trees that had been transplanted in this way. In one spot the transplanted tree died three times. They dug out and changed all the soil before they finally got a tree to grow there. No wonder their orchards on Tai-shan were such a picture, and that by them the whole of Tai-shan was being transformed.

These Christians were transplanting about 20,000 trees a year on this bare mountain. The seedlings were taken from their own nurseries in the late winter and transported about thirty miles. All these activities were harmonized and controlled by the Friday evening leaders' meeting. (Anyone was free to attend although it was held especially for leaders' discussions). Here all their policy was formulated. I was an honorary p80 member and usually attended these interesting and instructive meetings.

Quite apart from these routine matters, which may seem so exceptional to us, extraordinary incidents like the following happened from time to time. A section of road and a dike outside their district needed repairing. The Communist call of conscripted labour included young men both from the Chia-ting and also from a nearby heathen village. This village had shown continuous enmity to the Gospel and had in many ways proved a great trial to MaChuang. They had proved themselves intractable to every advance and now they were proving themselves implacable enemies.

This particular call-up was an excellent chance for imposing on and harming the Christians, for the heathen village elder was in charge of the operations. Half the work was to be done by each village, but this elder said the Communist order was that MaChuang was to send men to both sections. He sent his people only to repair the dike. As the burden on the Christians increased, so did that on the heathen correspondingly decrease; so much so, that in time all the work was being done by the former.

There was a time limit for the completion of the work, and this particular Friday evening meeting marked the halfway stage. Hen-shin rose and reported the unfairness of the situation. What was to be done? Should they report to the Communist authorities. This was vetoed and their justification placed in God's

hands. God would work for them; if not, they were well content. I was reminded of Daniel's friends, "Our God is able to deliver us . . . but if not. . ." On the Monday Communist overseers unexpectedly p81 arrived.

The elder did all in his power to keep the visit confined to the dike, where his men were doing part of the work. But the Communists also visited the road and asked why the MaChuang Christians were at work in both places. Heng-shin told him that such were his orders. "Orders from whom?" "From this village elder," said Heng-shin. The elder was caught and Heng-shin had to plead to keep him from gaol. The only punishment he received was that his people had to complete both places, but there was a further development.

The elder got himself into yet more trouble. On the following Friday night I heard the end of the matter. He was now in danger of his life for accepting bribes. (This was a very sore point just at this time with the Communists. They had promised there would be no more corruption in their government, in contrast to the Nationalists). The elder had twisted the road in one place to avoid an ancestral grove; in another, so as not to cut off the corner of a man's field, and had been bribed to do this.

Heng-shin was now placed in charge as the only one who was trustworthy. All the Christians were sent home, and the Ye-Su Chia-ting placed over the village. The Christians' yoke was easy, although they were given by the Communists complete control of the heathen. I have noticed in these Friday night meetings a spirit of contrition and confession. If faults are to be confessed, it is here in the presence of one another that it is done. I could write much on Communist "brain washing" and confession meetings, which are a peculiar phenomenon and sinister, in that they are a counterfeit of Christian confession "to one another."

It would do us good to meditate on this. Satan's system copies God's very closely. Communists confess from p82 the fear of one another; Christians confess from the fear and love of God. At the beginning of 1949, I had a particularly agonizing attack of peripheral neuritis. During four painful weeks, Miss Helen Tso was my nurse, with Ching-ts'ong as assistant. During this time I saw what utter surrender of self is, and what nursing can be when it is done as a vocation. There can be no doubt that the nursing staff is the centre and heart of the modern hospital.

Florence Nightingale's supreme sense of a nurse's vocation has been caught by these Chinese. Helen Tso had the responsibility of night duty, yet she carried on all her day duties as well. On my sick bed I wondered how it was possible, but there she was with the same quiet serenity, when the need arose. This was a period of great anxiety, and to meet the need whole days were set apart for fasting and prayer. Miss Tso fasted like Esther, tasting neither food nor water for three days and nights.

I have heard a Chinese preacher say that there are circumstances in which Heaven will be moved for us only if we are first moved on our own behalf. If we are to possess the power which the early church exercised, then apparently we must pay the same price. One day Mr. Ching said to me. "It is not power that we need, but a deeper death. Oh, that the purpose of Calvary might be seen in me!" The brethren then thought well to send me, after obtaining a Communist pass, to the Union Hospital in Tsinan, about three days to the north.

Dr. Smyllie was still there, although the city had been "liberated" for some time by the Communists. Under his able ministrations I gradually improved, and the time came for me to return to MaChuang. p83 Travel was rigorously controlled, and the young commissar, whom I interviewed, sent two soldiers to "protect" me. He told me that Communism would sweep Christianity away overnight. "Christianity is thistledown. It is not one of our worries." He asked me about the church at MaChuang, and I asked him why he did not

come and see for himself.

After a pause he said, "I will." Next morning, sure enough, he was at the station. As we travelled South, he told me what Communism was going to do in the world. "In England, America Australia -- nothing will stop us." We arrived in MaChuang, and he was shown to his room. I went to mine. I did not see him again for three days, and then he came to say good-bye. A change in his attitude was immediately apparent. He appeared to be humbled and chastened. "I have seen," he said, "something which I did not know existed in the world.

This is what we Communists want to do; we won't do it in a hundred years!" We shook hands and parted. And so the Homes of Jesus are thus witnessing to the Communists. There is no doubt that these dear folk have peculiarities. Dr. Samuel Johnson said to Boswell that "uncommon parts require uncommon opportunities for their exertion." At MaChuang we find both the uncommon parts and the uncommon opportunities, and how could they have carried on in these tragic and awful circumstances, if they did not have them?

Many have found fault with them because of certain peculiarities. What has been called their excess of emotion has displeased some. Sometimes I found it hard to bear. Once I calmed myself by wondering what I would have p84 thought if I had seen Jacob lift up his voice and weep when he saw Rachel for the first time (Gen. 29:11). It was not long in my case before all their peculiarities were hidden and swept away by a vision of their overwhelming love of the Lord Jesus and their allegiance to Him to the death.

I sat with enthusiastic young Chinese in a new church vestry and heard their stories. This church was a landmark in the greyish drab Chinese village, for it was of red brick. Something had gone wrong in the kiln, and the young people found that their bricks had turned out red instead of the usual slate grey. It was the first case of red brick in that district, and so the series of kilns had continued to the end until the church was completed. There was revival in the district and parties were coming in to recount their experiences.

All was well except in one place called Meo village. The young people from this village were mystified. Prayer had been made, exhortation given, idols had been taken down and burned, many in the village had been apparently converted, yet all remained as before; there was no revival and no manifestation of the work of the Holy Spirit. The village elders looked at one another. They knew what was wrong and they also knew now that our God is a God of knowledge, by whom actions are weighed.

There was hidden sin and Jehovah saw it. He clearly" was not like their idols. The 139th Psalm became real to them: "Yea the darkness hideth not from Thee but the night shineth as the day, the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." "Come," said the elders, "and we will show you what is wrong." Picks and shovels were produced, and their earth gods were dug up in pots from back yards in which they p85 were buried. When the last had been removed, destroyed and burned, revival began.

So the rejoicing in that village mingled with awe and the fear of God. I learned that the custom of burying the earth gods was peculiar to this village and not known in any others. A Chinese Christian came with me to a market-place and we watched a countryman at a butcher's stall. The butcher was giving him bits from every part of the pig and he was threading them on a string, an eye, piece of ear, entrails; all were included. "Let's question him," said my companion in answer to my query as to what he was doing.

"He has sworn to give a pig to his idol if it would grant his request; apparently his prayer has been granted and this is the result." "But has your idol no eyes, can it not see you are deceiving it?" said I. "But the idol

also deceives me; why should I not deceive it?" was the countryman's reply. About this time we crossed the hills to one of the villages revival had visited. There was much coming and going and joy was on every side. Singing and voices raised in prayer were very marked.

We sat in the chief guest room with the village headman and asked how it happened. "It is quite a long story," he said, "and began over two years ago, when my second son, Old-two, bought a Bible on the market place. We knew it was a foreign book and we warned him not to read it. But apparently he did and we noticed a great change coming over him. I taxed him with reading the book in secret; he admitted it and said that he had given his heart to the Saviour Jesus, whose story was given in it. p86 "His elder brother, Old-big, and I determined to put a stop to his involvement with this foreign religion, so we burned the book and treated him so badly that he became sick and died.

We thought that that was the end of it. But about two weeks ago Old-big came in tired from the harvest field and went to sleep without having his meal. In spite of all our efforts he did not wake until the third day, then he suddenly sat up, called us all and said he had seen Old-two. "Gradually the whole village gathered as he told his dream; although he would not admit that it was a dream, it was too real he said." Then began a marvellous story from the old headman to which we listened enthralled.

Old-big in his dream had seen what St. John describes in Revelation chapters 21 and 22; the River, the Tree of Life, the Fruit, the Book of Life, the Golden Streets -- all were there, and Old-big had never read the Bible. Old-big had suddenly found himself transported to this place and there was Old-two coming to meet him with his arms outstretched in welcome and a smile of joy upon his face, with no resentment, no remembrance of the wrong that had been done him. "He thought that I too had died, but had first received Jesus," broke in Old-big.

Two men in white then took us to the centre of the city where we saw a large book, in which the names of all the saved were written. Old-two showed me his name. We looked for mine, but it was not there, neither was Father's name nor Mother's nor the name of anyone from this village." "What a cry of anguish and lamentation went up from us all," said the old man. "We fell on our faces and cried to God." p87 "All this took place not much more than a week ago. We sent for someone to help us, and found that revival had broken out in other villages also, and there were you brothers and sisters of the Ye-su Chia-ting, for you had come into the district."

This book would be the poorer if I did not add something about a Russian lady who was saved from a life of degradation by the Ye-Su Chia-ting. Born in Southern Siberia, she met and married a Chinese landowner, and lived with him on the Russian-Manchurian border. A few happy prosperous years passed and three sons were born. Then in the early 30's, the Japanese invasion burst upon them. They lost all, and her husband was killed. Before he died he gave her his home address in Shantung.

Having no other resources, she set out for her husband's home village, thinking that it would be something like her happy Manchurian home. She was shocked to find her father-in-law an opium smoker, living in a squalid Chinese village in such squalor as she had not seen before. All the family patrimony was being spent on opium, and the father-in-law was incensed at having four more mouths to feed. Mrs. Chang, for that was her name, could speak no Chinese, but she soon sensed that plans were afoot to sell her to a brothel.

By this time she had been reduced to rags and starvation, most of the little she had left being used to keep her three children alive. It was at this point that the Ye-Su Chia-ting heard of her. A Russian woman, report

said, was in Meo village, about forty miles away. She was in rags, starving, and about to be sold into a brothel. No time was to be lost. Perhaps even then they were too late. Three of the brethren set out p88 immediately with a barrow as a conveyance to try to persuade her and her three boys to go with them to MaChuang.

When they arrived they found her like a tigress, unable to speak Chinese and fearing everybody. The three brethren were in a quandary, for she resisted all their approaches. In their utter perplexity, they knelt beside their barrow in prayer. That did it! When she saw them praying, memories of her girlhood immediately flooded back, the church in Russia she had attended, and the way in which the congregation and her parents used to kneel in prayer. The brethren's quest was successful; she gave in straightway and went with them. _ She has been converted and is now an honoured member of the MaChuang Home of Jesus.

Two of her sons are married to two sweet Chinese girls. Her third son has joined the Communists and she has lost sight of him. This is one of the few tragedies I experienced. All the family but this son live together and work for the Lord in MaChuang.

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