Asia Harvest



'Put in the Sickle, for the Harvest has Come!' (Mark 4:29)

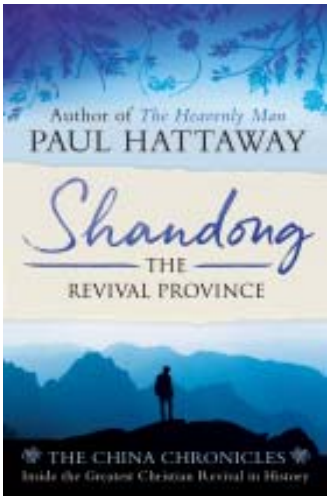
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SHANDONG

'The Revival Province' by Paul Hattaway



SHANDONG

- The Revival Province -

Book 1 of 'The China Chronicles'

by Paul Hattaway

In this newsletter we are glad to announce the first book in a series on the mighty revival which has swept China during the past 50 years. We believe ***The China Chronicles*** books will be a great blessing and encouragement, and will enrich the spiritual lives of all who read them.

Many people are aware of the extraordinary explosion of Christianity in China, but few know how this miracle occurred. The genesis of this project came at a meeting I attended in the year 2000, where senior Chinese house church leaders expressed the need for their members to understand how God has established His kingdom throughout China.

My intention is not to present readers with a dry list of names and dates, but to record the marvelous acts of the Holy Spirit, as God's kingdom has taken root and flourished in the world's most populated country.

I consider it a great honor to write these books, especially as I have been entrusted, through hundreds of hours of interviews with church leaders throughout China, with many testimonies that have never previously been shared in public.

As a new believer in the 1980s, I recall reading reports from the Soviet Union of how Christians were being brutally persecuted, yet the kingdom of God was growing rapidly. By the time the Soviet empire collapsed in the early 1990s, no one had systematically recorded the glorious deeds of the Holy Spirit during the Communist era. Tragically, the miracles God performed in those decades behind the Iron Curtain have mostly been forgotten, and the Body of Christ is much the poorer for it.

Consequently, I have been determined to preserve a record of God's mighty acts in China, so that future generations of believers can hear about the wonderful events that have transformed tens of millions of lives there.

Today, the Church in China is one of the strongest in the world, both spiritually and numerically. Yet little more than a century ago, China was considered one of the most resistant mission fields. How things have changed!

When it's all said and done, no person will be able to take creditfor the amazing revival in China. It will be clear that this great accomplishment is the handiwork of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. *"The Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it"* (Psalm 118:23–24).



Map of China with Shandong Province highlighted.

A NOTE ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

SHANDONG is the first book we have written in collaboration with SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge). Incredibly, in a transient world where everything seems to be constantly changing, SPCK have been a rock of stability for a very long time. **They were established in 1698, and have produced quality Christian books for the last 320 years without ever going out of business!**

SPCK were faithfully strengthening the Body of Christ 78 years before the U.S. Declaration of Independence; and 142 years before the founding of my home country New Zealand! It has been a pleasure working with the friendly and professional staff at SPCK, and they have produced a beautiful book that does justice to the stories contained within its pages.

The remainder of this newsletter contains excerpts from 'SHANDONG: China's Revival Province', with a glimpse into a few key moments in the history of the Church in Shandong, which is home to almost 100 million people. To order a copy of the book, please see the enclosed form or visit our website (www.asiaharvest.org) for details.

The Jesus Family



In the 1920s, Jing Dianying (pictured) founded an indigenous Chinese church movement in Shandong, which came to be known as the 'Jesus Family'. For decades the Jesus Family grew and spread throughout China, becoming a forerunner of today's house church movements.

The work began after Jing and his wife knelt together and dedicated themselves to unreservedly obey the Bible. They sold all of their possessions and gave the money to the poor. When other believers joined them, they pooled their resources and purchased 43 acres of land in the village of Mazhuang in central Shandong. The property served both as headquarters for the church and as home to a flourishing community of believers. The group's five-word slogan encapsulated their commitment to Christ and their pattern of frugal living: '**Sacrifice, abandonment, poverty, suffering, death**.'

To outsiders, the main distinguishing feature of the Jesus Family was the tremendous love the members had for one another. The elderly were treated with the utmost respect, and children were raised in a loving environment. Each day began and ended with a group Bible study. On Sundays, all members of the Family came together to worship the Lord.

In 1930, the Jesus Family began to tithe one-tenth of the harvest of their land to the poor. God blessed their crops to such a degree that one of the leaders, Heng Shin, later testified, "We felt we should add a tenth each year. This year we are giving away nine-tenths." Incredibly, on 43 acres of land, the Jesus Family was able to support 500 believers and still give away 90 percent of their harvest to the poor.

As the movement grew, Jesus Family members formed evangelistic groups that visited many towns and villages, preaching the gospel as they walked from place to place. Their example of communal living and genuine Christian love attracted those who were searching for life's answers, especially the homeless, destitute and despised. Many blind people and beggars joined the Family and found eternal life in Christ. Things were far from easy, and often when the believers entered a new town most of the population would come out to beat and humiliate them.

The Chicken and the Egg

The moral transformation of Jesus Family members was far-reaching. During the civil war that raged throughout China in the 1930s, one of the pastors was arrested and thrown into jail for sheltering a Nationalist soldier. One day, his hungry wife was deep in prayer when a chicken wandered in from the street and laid an egg. The woman's conscience wouldn't allow her to take the egg laid by someone else's chicken for free, but she didn't know who it belonged to. She caught the chicken and tied a note to its leg along with some cash to pay for the egg, and released it back into the street.

The owner of the chicken was astounded when he received the note and payment, and news of the deed soon reached the Communist judge in the area. He investigated the matter and was amazed to discover such honesty. The judge dismissed the case against the pastor and immediately released him from jail.

The Jesus Family was the first Christian group in China to have a vision to take the gospel from China all the way back to Jerusalem. Their workers carried baskets of food and essentials as they walked across the country. The movement grew rapidly, and by 1941 there were 141 different Jesus Family communities in eight provinces, with approximately 6,000 members in Shandong alone.

Zhang Tangwu

Many men and women of God have suffered greatly for the gospel in Shandong Province. One such brother was Zhang Tangwu from Weifang. Zhang was thrown into prison in the 1950s, where he contracted a strange skin disease on his upper back. When he was taken to court and questioned by judges, Zhang simply smiled and told them about Jesus' love. In prison his witness was so strong that the other inmates gave him the nickname, 'Living Jesus.'

Zhang was sentenced to death by the Communists, and as he awaited the day of his execution, the disease grew so bad that puss openly oozed from his back, and the prison doctors were convinced he would soon die. For many years this man of God had prayed that he would not die in prison, but that he might die on the mission field spreading the gospel among sinners.

The other prisoners were terrified of Zhang's disease, so they threw him out of their cell and made him sleep in the disgusting latrine, in a pool of human excrement and urine. Covered in open sores, the officials knew the unhygienic surrounds of the latrine would quickly cause infection, so they made arrangements for Zhang's burial the next day. With death knocking at his door, Zhang continued to preach the gospel to every prisoner and guard who came to use the toilet.



Zhang Tangwu knelt down in the excrement and wept bitterly for the wasted opportunities in his life. Painfully, he dragged his half-dead body out of the latrine. With the Lord's help he inched his way to the prison courtyard, which had a mound of stones in the center. He ascended the mound and held on to the top stone. With a loud voice he proclaimed, "Everyone, listen to me! You must receive Jesus Christ as Lord!" All the prisoners could hear him clearly because their cells faced the courtyard.

With tears in his eyes and in great anguish of soul, Zhang cried out: "I am not crying because of my disease or because of my impending death! I am crying because your souls are precious to God. He loves you and longs to call you His children."

At that very moment, an earthquake shook the ground and the prisoners were terrified. They were doubly afraid because they couldn't understand how Zhang had

been able to drag himself back from death's door to preach to them with such a loud and authoritative voice.

Because of the exertion of dragging himself from the latrine to the courtyard, Zhang Tangwu's infected back split into two. The skin between his two shoulder blades was no longer joined together, and puss flowed down and covered his waist and legs.

The prison guards finally came and carried him back to the latrine. They decided not to shoot him, because they expected him to die within hours anyway.

The next morning when the guards came to inspect Zhang they were amazed to find that his back had become better and was healing. Within three months he recovered completely! Terrorized by the supernatural events that had displayed the glory of God, the authorities were too afraid to deal with Zhang, and they released him from prison.

God granted Zhang Tangwu the desire of his heart, and he continued to preach the gospel among sinners until the end of his life.

God's Wrath Leads many to Repentance

In recent decades the gospel has continued to spread throughout Shandong Province, sometimes assisted by manifestations of God's wrath. Government officials who reveled in persecuting Christians were suddenly struck down. Many people believed in Jesus as a result, for they knew the Living God had intervened on behalf of His children by punishing the evildoers for their deeds.

In August 2002, a small group of evangelists traveled to a village to share the gospel with idol worshippers. A 30-year-old man approached and ordered them to stop preaching. When they refused, the man flew into a demonic rage, blaspheming the Name of Jesus and spewing forth filthy insults and curses against God's servants.

A crowd of onlookers gathered to observe the spectacle, and were amazed to see how calm the Christians remained as they blessed and prayed for the man. After about 20 minutes he left the meeting, but a short time later the villagers learned that he had been knocked down and killed by a car. The villagers knew that God had judged the wicked man, and many repented of their sins and placed their trust in Jesus.



The Church in Shandong Today

In 2016 the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, demanded to meet privately with several senior Chinese house church leaders. Although the content of their discussions was kept strictly confidential, the results were soon evident, as waves of persecution broke out against the house churches throughout China.

In Shandong's Qingdao City, the police visited a local house church leader and told him, "We know all about your meetings. We have been instructed to close you down, but we will continue to let you meet if you give us all the weekly offerings you collect in your churches!"

The house church leader rejected their attempted extortion, and the church broke up into numerous small groups, allowing them to gather discreetly and without disturbance from the corrupt local authorities.

In 2017 and 2018, many pastors and evangelists have been arrested and interrogated in Shandong, while others have been bundled into vans or taken from their homes and sent to one of China's notorious secret 'black jails'—unofficial places where the government's perceived enemies are taken and tortured mercilessly.

A letter Asia Harvest received from Shandong in late 2016 presented a sobering summary of the conditions in the province at the time:

"The government now requires that all churches be controlled by the Communist Party. They must even display a national flag to show their loyalty. Some large churches have been asked to hand over their offerings to the police. When the pastors refuse to do so, they are ordered to disband their congregations. The crackdown has been spreading and we expect tough times ahead.

The government is once again trying to squeeze the life out of the Church. There are new laws prohibiting any religious activities without government approval—even holding Bible studies of more than ten people in homes. We need to conduct trainings with fewer participants."

Recently, one Shandong house church leader told us: **"Things here are like in Mao's day! We never thought we would return to such a time. The younger generation of believers have never experienced severe persecution, and they are shaken. Please pray they will patiently endure, and their faith will be tested and found to be like pure gold."**

As you read our new book, you will learn how the Church in Shandong has been blessed with powerful revivals, and from the ruins of ashes, floods, famines and wars has arisen a shining and holy Bride of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has gained much glory from His disciples in Shandong, where today an estimated 5.2 million people confess Christ as Lord and Savior.

While the current leaders of China appear determined to repeat the mistakes of their predecessors by again trying to destroy God's children, let us pray that the persecution will again result in revival and rapid growth in Shandong—the blessed Revival Province of China.

The great need of Christians in Shandong continues to be Bibles. Those in rural areas have struggled to access God's Word for many years, and the large numbers of new believers has seen the size of the need far outstrip the supply. **The need for our China Bible Fund is greater than ever**, with an increasing number of believers in China unable to access Bibles due to government restrictions and persecution.

With your prayers and support, Asia Harvest has provided more than 875,000 Bibles to house church believers in Shandong over the years, and we will continue to do so as long as the Lord keeps the door open. Please pray for the Church in Shandong!

ASIAN WORKERS' FUND



We currently support 1,259 Asian evangelists among 922 unreached people groups.

The **Asian Workers' Fund** supports indigenous church-planting evangelists among unreached Asian tribes and ethnic groups. These servants of the Lord have committed their whole lives to the Gospel but are hindered by lack of finances. To date, the evangelists we help have led **259,518 people to faith in Jesus Christ.** You can help support these dedicated workers for **$25 per month** each**.** A prayer card and occasional updates are sent to all regular donors of this project.

CHINA BIBLE FUND



Current Total: 10,931,830 Chinese Bibles printed and distributed.

We are partnering with house churches in China in a long-term project to provide Bibles for Christians. We receive countless requests for God's Word from church leaders throughout the country. These Bibles are distributed free of charge, equipping the Body of Christ and helping add fuel to the revival in China.

Each full Chinese Bible costs just $1.80 to print and deliver.

ASIAN BIBLE FUND



Current Total: 845,093 Bibles printed in 87 languages.

Asia is home to many ethnic groups where people have been deprived of God's Word, sometimes for decades. The **Asian Bible Fund** provides the Scriptures in numerous languages in **South-east Asia, the Indian subcontinent**, and anywhere in Asia that God's people need His Word.

Each Bible costs an average of $2.70 to print and deliver.

LIVING MARTYRS' FUND

Because of your partnership we are supporting 291 living martyrs.



A martyr has been defined as "a Christian who chooses to suffer death rather than deny Christ or His work... One who sacrifices something very important to further the Kingdom of God and endures great suffering for Christian witness."

The **Living Martyrs' Fund** supports church leaders and widows in China, Vietnam and elswhere who are unable to work because of injuries or illness caused by persecution. A gift of **$35 per month** you can help support one of these living martyrs. A prayer card is sent to every supporter of this project.

BLESS THE CHILDREN FUND



Your generous support has so far impacted 137,642 children for Jesus throughout Asia.

The **Bless the Children Fund** introduces children to Jesus Christ in India, China, Vietnam, Indonesia, and a host of other countries. Activities include printing and distributing children's Gospel literature, providing free surgeries for those with special needs, and generally lifting children out of spiritual and physical poverty. The results of this project have been staggering. It costs an average of just **$10 to impact a child for Christ**.

PERSECUTION & RELIEF FUND



Transforming lives from ashes to beauty with God's love.

This project provides assistance to the victims of natural disasters in Asia, by providing medicine, tents, blankets, food and water, rebuilding homes etc. The Asian Christians we partner with take every opportunity to share the Gospel, and multitudes of people have come to know the Lord Jesus. This project also provides physical and spiritual relief to Christian communities and families that have been affected by persecution.



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