

What People Are Saying About *The Underground Church*...

If you want to better understand the move of God inside China, *The Underground Church* is a great read.

—David L. Meyer
CEO, Hand of Hope
Joyce Meyer Ministries

Author Eugene Bach takes us inside the church movement that sparked the largest revival the earth has ever seen. What's more, he does not write as an outsider. Instead, he explains from firsthand experience details about the house churches, much of which has never before been published.

—Billy Humphrey
Director, International House of Prayer Atlanta

On my first visit to the underground church in China, I was struck by the raw courage of its members. I remember being ready to teach when the Holy Spirit came and called many of the young men and women to martyrdom; those not called were disappointed! It is their courage, their passionate commitment to Jesus, and their total sacrifice of self that sets them apart, and it is our privilege to partner with them. If you take it to heart, this book will transform your life.

—Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Jan Ransom MBE
Director, Flame International

The Underground Church gives an unparalleled perspective into the revival and the emergence of the House Church movement. I have had the privilege of being able to travel and minister in China for the last thirty years and have been able to experience the growth of this enormous revival firsthand. I was deeply touched by this book

and can give it my warmest recommendation. *The Underground Church* will inspire you and challenge you. As a Chinese pastor said to me recently, “If God can send a revival like this to China, He can send one anywhere.”

—Eivind Froen

Missions Strategist

Founder of YWAM Norway

In the West, we have problems grasping what is really going on in the most populated country in the world. Eugene gives us a unique insight into the things God is doing in China. We learn how the church has been organized, and we get to know about many of the underground networks. We get to hear about the miracles in Bible printing, evangelism, and church planting. At the same time, the book is not hiding the human weaknesses and challenges. In spite of difficulties, these churches are all consumed with one thing: “How can we fulfill the Great Commission and bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to every people group?”

—Noralf Askeland

Director, Ministries Without Borders Philippines

The Underground Church is written by someone in the field who has years of experience with the House Church movement in China. For the first time, we get an inside view and a little grasp of this great work God has developed under severe circumstances. Having traveled multiple times within this network of churches and seen firsthand the work of God, and having personal friendship with the authors, I can verify the trustworthiness of this book. Enjoy your reading.

—Erik Jensen

AsiaLink Norway

National leader, Foursquare Norway

After working in China for more than thirty years with the underground House Church, I enthusiastically recommend this book to anybody and everybody who is truly interested in what God is doing in China. Eugene Bach reveals for the first time some of the most miraculous things that God has done in China, and I can verify their authenticity.

—*Rev. Rauno Jalavisto*
China Coordinator, Keymedia, Finland

THE UNDER GROUND CHURCH

EUGENE **BACH** & BROTHER **ZHU**



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Contents

Foreword by Brother Yun.....	8
Introduction: A Miracle of Bibles for China	10
Part 1: Uncovering the Mystery	
1. The Crimson Cross	27
2. Roots of Chinese Christianity.....	39
3. Clearing Up the Confusion.....	50
4. Tested by Fire	62
5. From Goose Feces to Gulags: The Founding of China Gospel Fellowship	75
6. The Growth of China Gospel Fellowship	90
Part 2: Inside the Henan House Church Networks	
7. Brief Introduction to the Networks	102
8. Tanghe (China Gospel Fellowship)	106
9. Fangcheng (China for Christ Church).....	117
10. Five Brothers (“No Name”)	126
11. Born Again Movement (Peter Xu)	141
12. The Cave	156
Part 3: Inside the Anhui House Church Networks	
13. Truth (Yingshan, or Zhenli)	167
14. Blessing (Lixin, or Mongfu)	178
15. Little Joe’s Network	189
16. Other Networks and Personalities	198
17. Wenzhou.....	214
18. Missionary Training	227
Part 4: The Future of the Chinese House Church	
19. The Back to Jerusalem Vision	239
20. Nine Significant Features of the House Church.....	257
Notes.....	269

Foreword

God wants to take you on a path that you could never imagine!

Greetings from “the Heavenly Man.” As a follower of Jesus, I am your partner in patiently enduring the suffering that comes to those who belong to His kingdom. The Bible tells us, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). And Jesus Himself tells us the following truth: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).

Before the God who loves us, I sincerely recommend to you this great book, *The Underground Church*. I can assure you that if you truly surrender yourself to God’s purposes, this book will not only convert your old, wrong concept about being a missionary but will also guide you onto a radical mission path. Thanks be to God!

As you read this work, you will be amazed at so many wonderful acts that God is doing in the Chinese church today. The Back to Jerusalem vision is not merely a call to the Chinese church; Western believers of this age should also share a part in it. Perhaps your specific plan or commitment differs from mine. But, remember, Jesus’ Great Commission is for everyone who follows Him: “Preach this good news about the kingdom through the world for a witness to all nations.”

O Lord! May Your kingdom come down upon China, the Middle East, and Jerusalem! Surely, God’s time to move has come near! Through our Lord Jesus’ death on the cross and the power that raised Him from the dead, the Holy Spirit will take us step-by-step into the very destiny to which God has called us in the last days—to go and spread Jesus’ great love among the nations that

are full of atheism, Buddhism, and Hinduism, and those that are in the Middle East.

With God's truthful words, we can say with full conviction that the good news about Jesus Christ is going to save all who believe. Descendants of Ishmael and Isaac alike can be saved by believing in Jesus' name! Will you accept and respond to God's call for your life, and then start to work together with Him?

—*Brother Yun*

Author, *The Heavenly Man*

Introduction: A Miracle of Bibles for China

I was finally able to sit down with the mysterious Brother Ren. He was seated across from me at a small wooden table and seemed to be deep in thought as he began to tell me about the things that he had seen in China over the past thirty years.

It is not easy to arrange a meeting with Brother Ren. Some would say that it is next to impossible. Brother Ren, also known as the “Flying Finn,” can meet with you for dinner one evening, preach a message on the opposite side of the globe before you even wake up the following morning, and be back in time to greet you for lunch. It had taken a lot of planning, and nothing short of an act of God, to “trap” him long enough to talk with him about his vast experiences with the underground House Church in China.

Brother Ren has been the pastor of Brother Yun—more widely known as “the Heavenly Man”—for many years. He is also the official translator for Brother Yun, because he is one of the few Mandarin speakers in the West who can understand Yun’s strong rural dialect.

Like most people, you’ve probably never heard of Brother Ren. Keep in mind that in secret organizations, such as the CIA, the Chinese PSB (Public Security Bureau), or the KGB in the former Soviet Union, recognition and fame are synonymous with failure. This reality is also true for Brother Ren. Any fame or advertisement of his achievements would be a major failure, as they would most likely lead to the shutting down of projects and missionary work in many closed countries around the world.

So, Brother Ren and I were sitting on a remote island in Northern Europe. The island, only about one kilometer across

with no signs of human life, had no running water or electricity. It was truly a remarkable place, the complete opposite of the crowded and dusty streets of rural China that Brother Ren has called home for over three decades.

Brother Ren has been responsible for printing and delivering more than eleven million Bibles in China; organizing the training of over two hundred thousand Chinese Sunday School teachers; arranging for the training of thousands of pastors, evangelists, and missionaries; funneling tens of millions of dollars directly to the mission field; and participating in what may quite possibly be the largest missionary movement in the history of mankind.

I started off the interview with this question: “I know that you have been one of the few people able to print and distribute the Bible in China. How did that happen? How did that start?” He leaned back in his chair and paused for a moment to think, then sat up and excitedly moved to the edge of his seat as he began to tell the story in vivid detail.

What follows is a true account as told by Brother Ren. The facts have been cross-checked and confirmed with other participants in the events mentioned. Never before has this true tale of Christian boldness been written down or told in any formal manner.

“It was not easy to get Bibles into China after Deng Xiaoping opened up the nation for international trade in the 1980s. The Bibles were trickling in one by one, and it was considered a huge success if one believer in a thousand could get their hands on a Bible. This carried on even in the 1990s. One of the growing trends at the time was bringing Bibles into China in suitcases. Many missionaries and students from around the world began to travel to Hong Kong and cross the border to China to carry in Bibles and drop them off at predesignated collection points. In those days, most Bibles came into Hong Kong from Japan, because Japan was one of the few places in Asia where the high-quality paper needed for Bible printing could be purchased.

“During the 1980s, I was living in Taiwan and preaching the gospel there. The Lord had placed a heavy burden on my heart for China, and in the 1990s, my family and I moved to Hong Kong. I had taken tour groups from the West into China and was familiar with Hong Kong and southern China. The needs of the church in those days were even greater than today, because, in many ways, it was still in the beginning stages. With so many needs, it was hard to decide where to begin, but the need for Bibles throughout China was so huge that I decided to start there. I became a ‘donkey’ for Jesus and began to carry Bibles into China. I often took the Bibles into the southern area and dropped them off in places like Guilin.

“After carrying Bibles into China for several months, I began to feel challenged by the expense involved. Being a donkey for Jesus was not cheap. I sat down and figured out the actual cost of taking Bibles into China. If you calculated the cost of printing the Bibles in Japan, shipping them to Hong Kong, paying travel expenses for the courier (such as airfare, food, and lodging), and losing some Bibles to confiscation, it was a very expensive operation. I figured it out to be more than U.S.\$50 per Bible—and that was in the 1990s.

“God gave me the idea of printing Bibles inside China, but I was a courier, not a printer. Who was I to begin a printing operation? I went to people from several missions organizations that I knew had a history of doing these kinds of projects. I asked them what they thought about the idea of partnering with me to print Bibles in China. Every time I mentioned the idea, I got one of two responses. They either said that they had tried before and it didn’t work, or they hadn’t tried before and didn’t want to. The Bible League said that they had just made a large financial investment in an expensive printing press in Japan, so printing in China would make that investment obsolete. Many organizations had ‘burned their hands’ in China and didn’t want to try again.

“I was disappointed at the results of trying to find a partner who knew what they were doing. I had no clue what to do next,

but the Lord would not take the burden from my mind. On one occasion in 1994, I was able to have a meeting with a well-known businessman from Taiwan who owned one of the major skyscrapers in prestigious Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. We met and discussed the idea of printing inside China. The business owner was a Christian and wanted to use his resources to help the church in China. He would later be one of the people who helped get Brother Yun out of China.

“The Taiwanese Christian businessman liked the idea of printing Bibles in China and agreed with me that there must be a better way than carrying the Bibles across the border in suitcases. He arranged for his secretary to meet me at the Hong Kong airport, and she gave me the money to begin the process of searching for a way to print Bibles inside China.

“From Hong Kong, I traveled to Guilin and contacted a professor at one of the local universities who was a good friend of Brother Yun. This is the same professor who spent time living with Brother Yun and who painstakingly handwrote Yun’s entire testimony on a pad of paper. That pad of paper eventually led to a book known around the world today as *The Heavenly Man*.

“‘I have someone I would like you to meet,’ the professor said to me when I saw him in Guilin. In China, you don’t just look up potential partners in the yellow pages; you are either introduced to them or you don’t get any partners at all. With most things in China, it is not about what you know but *who* you know.

“The professor thought that it would be beneficial for me to meet his friend. He knew what I was up to and knew the risks involved with printing Bibles in China, so he connected me with someone who he thought would be experienced enough to help me tackle the dangerous task. I needed someone who could help me navigate the underground world of illegal activity in China.

“When I met with the professor’s friend for the first time, he looked like he was straight out of a movie. The man looked like a CIA agent. Just by looking at him, you could tell that he was

used to living on the other side of authority. There was something that was very shady about him. He was wearing a hunting vest, his thick black hair was pulled back into a ponytail, and he just looked like someone who seemed to be fully aware of everything going on around him. When he walked into the room, I thought that I had been compromised. I thought that the professor had told the wrong person, and now China's Public Security Bureau had assigned this man to take me down.

“‘This is my friend Simon [not his real name],’ the professor said as I reached out to shake his hand. Even though I had my suspicions, I quickly found myself falling victim to Simon's quick wit and charm. However, I remained very cautious the first time that I met him and chose not to share with him the idea for printing Bibles.

“I soon went back to Hong Kong but often traveled to Guilin. Many foreigners liked to take Bibles to Guangzhou, and their favorite place to stay was The Garden Hotel. Because of this fact, it was heavily watched, and most of the rooms were wired. The hotel was a gold mine for the Chinese authorities, because many foreign guests would talk about their ideas and projects, carelessly mentioning names of coworkers. All of this information was thus made available for the Chinese authorities to collect and exploit. This was one of the reasons I chose Guilin for my meetings instead of more traditional places like Guangzhou or Shenzhen. Guilin was frequented by tourists and government officials, rather than by conspicuous missionaries.

“On one of my trips to Guilin, the phone in my hotel room rang soon after I had arrived. I answered the phone, and it was Simon. I wondered how he knew I was in town, because I hadn't told anyone that I was going to Guilin. No one should have known which hotel I was staying at, let alone the very room I was in! Immediately, I was suspicious.

“‘*Ni hao*,’ I said as a general greeting. Simon invited me to come to his home for dinner, a huge honor in China. I was still

suspicious. He seemed to know too much. I thought that dinner might just be a ruse to trap me, but there was another part of me that said to trust him. My policy was to follow the old Ronald Reagan strategy of ‘Trust, but verify.’ I accepted the invitation.

“I took a taxi to the location he had told me to go to, but I didn’t go directly to the address. Instead, I asked the driver to keep driving. We drove a few blocks down the road, and then I walked around the area, looking for anything suspicious and for possible escape routes if I needed to leave in a hurry.

“Simon would later tell me that he had contacts in the hotel I was staying in who had been instructed to look out for me and alert him if they saw me. I didn’t know it then, but Simon would soon play a huge part in my life, and we would grow to be very close friends.

“When I went into the home, the house was filled with some of the most amazing aromas I have ever smelled in my life. Simon was an amazing, world-class chef! He warmly welcomed me into his home and showed me around. It is not easy to explain, but we had an immediate connection. Simon was a new friend, but it felt as if I had known him for years.

“I had never eaten such good food in all my life! Simon was able to work magic with food and put together flavors that danced across your tongue. After dinner, Simon showed me his photography awards and shared stories with me about his family’s grand and royal history. As the evening came to a close, Simon invited me to return and spend time with his family.

“I later went and spent time with his parents and grandparents. I am usually very secretive about my vision and projects for China, but with Simon’s family I shared exactly what God had called me to do. I shared with them about my ideas regarding the movement of God in the world and what I felt God had told me regarding the future of China and the Chinese underground House Church. Upon hearing my story, Simon’s grandmother took me by the hand, looked intensely in my eyes, and asked me

one of the strangest questions I had ever been asked: 'Would you like to be adopted by our family?'

"I heard the words that she said but immediately thought that I must not be able to understand her Chinese. She asked again, 'Would you like to be adopted by our family?' As she said it again, I realized that I did in fact understand the words coming out of her mouth; they just didn't make sense to me. Why would I want to be adopted? I was more than forty years old. The time to adopt me was over. Besides, I had my own mother, father, and grandparents.

"I began to tell myself that maybe the family needed money or some 'golden goose' to help their family with financial problems and saw that this foreigner might provide them with a way out of poverty. I took that opportunity to reiterate that I was only a missionary who was financially poor and had nothing to offer. The grandmother looked at me. You could tell from the expression on her face that my financial status had never even crossed her mind.

"The grandmother was persistent. She felt that God was telling her to bring me into her family. I also felt the presence of the Lord and humbly accepted their great honor. Together, we went through the entire official process. I filled out all of the paperwork, and, upon completion, we had an official ceremony marking the time when I became an adopted member of Simon's family.

"From that day on, Simon and I became inseparable ministry partners. Whenever people saw us and asked who we were, I jokingly replied that we were brothers. This was funny to everyone who witnessed it, because it was obvious that this Chinese man and a Western European were not brothers. We would always tell people that we had different mothers but the same Father.

"Simon became my partner in crime to print the Bible in China. He turned out to be an amazingly resourceful man.

"Once we decided to print the Bible in China, we quickly arrived at the same conclusion: It couldn't be done. But we just continued to believe in God. I began to bring the Chinese Bible to Simon in pieces. Simon had been a photography instructor and

had many students who had graduated and started their own businesses. Many of those businesses were major photo shops. Piece by piece, we desired to build an archive of photographic negatives of the Bible for printers.

“Simon’s former students were everywhere, and they all welcomed us with warm and open arms. Everywhere we went, Simon would joke with them as he introduced me as his brother. After the formalities of meeting with the photography shop owners, we began to talk about our objectives. Eventually, we were able to find a place to make the film for the Bible printing. After some time, I received a phone call letting me know that the film was complete. The film was rolled up in newspaper when I picked it up.

“Once we had the film in our hands, we began to meet with each of the students again to see if we could get the Bible printed. When the students saw us coming, they were excited, I think for two reasons. One, they loved Simon. He really knew how to make a grand entrance and make his presence known. He didn’t have much money, but no one knew that. Simon was able to present himself in a way that impressed people and made them think that he had a lot of money. He knew only two English words, and he used them all the time, which made a big impression on the rural Chinese who thought Simon must have been really cultured to be able to speak English. Little did they know that the only two phrases Simon knew were ‘No problem’ and ‘Sit down, please.’ He used those two phrases all the time and was really good at pronouncing them well. The other reason I think they were excited to see us is that they saw a foreigner, i.e., an opportunity to make money. One by one, we shared with them our desire to print the Bible. Each time we told one of them, their heart would sink and they would hang their head in disappointment. ‘Dear honorable teacher, you are always welcome in our place. We would do anything to please you and assist you, but we are unable to help you on this project,’ they would often say in reply.

"I understood their challenge. If they agreed to help us, their livelihood would be in danger. At that time, a law had just come out that said that anyone caught printing a Bible would be arrested, their business confiscated, and they would be given a minimum of seven years in prison. We visited twelve to fifteen different photography shops, all of which were owned by Simon's former students, but every one of them was reluctant to help us. Even though I understood, I still found the fact that they wouldn't print the Bible a bit perplexing. I mean, we were traveling in the kinds of places that I had never been to before in the interior of China. These printers said they were not able to print Bibles illegally because the risk was too high, but most of them printed many illegal things that I considered to be much more dangerous than printing the Bible. They were printing pornography and antigovernment and anti-Communist materials. Personally, I thought that those materials were more damning for the government than a mere religious book.

"More time passed, and we visited all potential printing places Simon could think of. We traveled to places far from the city center and met with people who really knew the underground printing world well. We searched high and low and came up empty-handed. We felt that this vision was directly from the Lord and were really confused. If God wanted us to do this, then why were all of the doors closing on us? If God truly had given us the vision to print these Bibles in China, then why did every road lead to a dead end?

[One day,] "Simon had returned to the city. We were standing in the town square, and a sense of depression descended upon me. I looked at him and said, 'Simon, we have done all that we can do. There is nothing more than can be done.'

"'We haven't done *all* that we can do,' he replied.

"'Of course we have. Is there a place that we have not tried? Do you know someone else that we haven't talked to yet? It seems that everyone has turned us away because it is just too dangerous to print Bibles in China.'

“No. We have not tried *that* place.’

“I turned to look at the place he was pointing to. I saw a massive building within walking distance with a big red banner draped across the front. As I began to make sense of the bold Chinese characters on the banner, I realized what Simon was proposing was suicide!

“‘We can’t go there!’ I said quickly. ‘No way!’

“‘Why not?’ he replied.

“I looked at his face, expecting there to be a smirk or a laugh; maybe he was trying to lighten the mood from all of our disappointments. But as I studied him, I realized that he had a look of seriousness in his eyes. He wasn’t joking.

“I looked back up at the banner. The sign indicated that the building in front of us was the official printing headquarters for the Chinese government.

“‘How can we honestly tell the Lord that we have done all that we could if we have not?’ he said indignantly. ‘I cannot go to the Lord and tell Him in good conscience that I have done everything in my power to do what I believe He has called us to do. There is a printing press right there in front of us; all we have to do is try.’

“He was serious and had to be stopped. ‘Simon! Look at that building. It is the official printing press. Take a good long look at those guards. If we go over there with our request, it is possible they will shoot us. This is not funny. We are talking about a serious situation here.’

“Simon had made up his mind. He believed strongly that a believer who has been given a task from the Lord such as this one must put all of his or her trust in the Lord. Only walking by faith will allow us to see the glory of the Lord.

“I tried to reason with him, but he compelled me to trust in the Lord. I was encouraged by his faith but grounded by reason. As I looked at Simon, I knew that this was something he felt strongly about, and he would go into that building with or without me. On

the other hand, I felt that it was not only hopeless to try, but we were needlessly endangering our lives and work.

"It was at that moment that I wondered what kind of family I had been adopted into. I was reluctant to go, but as I looked back at Simon, he looked at me with a smirk on his face, patted me on the back, and said his famous phrase: 'No problem.'

"Together we walked to the main gate. We didn't have an appointment with anyone (you don't just walk up to one of these places unannounced). Simon boldly approached one of the guards—acting as if he had every right to walk into any top-security area in China—and said, 'Hello, I need to speak with the director. Can you please let him know that I am here?'

"The guards did exactly as they were told without missing a beat. They called the director on his direct line. 'Sir, there are two gentlemen here who have arrived without an appointment and would like to see you,' the guard said. I could hear the voice on the other end of the phone reply, 'Send them up to the fourth floor. I am waiting for them.' I stood still. The guard motioned for us to go on up. I looked over at Simon in disbelief, but he didn't look back. He was acting like things were going along just as he had envisioned.

"We arrived on the fourth floor and walked into the director's office. The office looked as large as a full-sized basketball court. It was decorated in hand-carved rosewood and made a very imposing impression on everyone who entered that office door. I could tell right away that this was a guy with enough power to have us arrested on the spot. I didn't know exactly how to start the conversation. I mean, how do you begin? *Hello sir, I know that you are employed by the government to print its most important propaganda in this country of more than one billion people, but would it also be possible for you to print this here Bible that has been outlawed?* What we were doing was absurd in every way.

"'Hello, hello,' he said warmly. 'Please come in and sit. How may I help you?'

“‘We have come to see about having this book printed,’ Simon explained to him. Coming from behind, I slowly unwrapped the Bible that I had been carefully concealing. This was the point of no return. Once I handed him the Bible and he saw what we were doing, there would be no explaining our way out of this.

“I slowly reached across to give him the Bible. He took it, looked at the cover, and ran his hands over the surface. He opened the Bible and flipped through the pages quickly, as if to examine the quality of the binding and to gauge the paper thickness. He then turned to a certain passage in Genesis. He flipped through the chapters in Genesis deliberately, as if he knew exactly what he was looking for. I stood there in shock as he began to read a story from the book of Genesis! He read aloud the story of Ishmael. After he read the passage, he asked us, ‘Are you Christians?’

“The room was silent. His question echoed in the room as well as in our minds. It took only a few seconds to answer, but the silence seemed to linger for an eternity.

“‘Yes,’ we said, refusing to deny the name of Christ, but still confused as to what would happen next.

“‘Well then, doesn’t that make you sons of Abraham?’ he asked as a matter of fact. We nodded our heads in agreement. ‘So am I. I, too, am a son of Abraham,’ he said as he handed back the Bible, indicating that he was actually a Muslim. Immediately, he asked, ‘How many books do you want me to print?’ I was not able to answer. I was in a state of shock. ‘No matter, I will call you when I have the sample ready.’ We shook hands, turned, and walked out the door—just like that!

“God is amazing, but the miracles were not done yet. Two weeks later, I received a call telling me that my package was finished. I met Simon, and we traveled there together. I arranged to get a small fold-up bag to carry the book or books in and also had stuffed my pockets with the needed cash because I had made it clear that we were not paying for the samples until the product was complete. I didn’t want a situation where I paid for a project that

was later reported to the authorities so the printer could take my money while I was detained by the police.

"When we arrived at the printing headquarters, we met with the Muslim fellow, and he led us down to a storage area. He walked up to these two massive doors and opened them. I almost fell over—the room was filled with Bibles! The stacks were higher than I have ever seen in my entire life. There were thousands of them.

"I dropped the small bag that I brought to carry them in; it was useless now. I couldn't fit twenty thousand Bibles in my pitiful duffel bag. We now had a huge load of Bibles in China, sitting in the warehouse of the Communist printing headquarters! There was no way on earth we could get these Bibles out of the building undetected. I looked over at Simon and asked, 'Great! What in the world are we going to do now?' Simon just smiled and replied, 'No problem.'

"Simon had a friend during elementary school who had sat next to him in class. As I said earlier, in China, it's not about what you know but *who* you know—referred to in Chinese as *guanxi*. Simon pulled out a phone and called his old classmate. I didn't know it then, but his old school chum was the commanding officer of the entire southern China armed forces. I could hear Simon using very polite language when talking with him over the phone. The commanding officer talked with him and, after some time, asked Simon, 'Simon, what is it I can do for you?'

"'Well, we happen to have a very sensitive document of a secure nature here at the Communist printing headquarters, and we would like some assistance in getting it to another location.'

"I could not hear the reply, but they talked for a little longer, and then Simon hung up the phone. I asked him what his friend said, and Simon smiled at me and said, 'He said, "No problem."'"

"Within minutes, a huge military truck came barreling our way. There were three men sitting in the truck and two men hanging on both sides. They backed the truck up to the warehouse and

began to load all of the ‘sensitive, top-secret’ documents. We didn’t even lift a finger; the soldiers loaded it all on the truck in no time. Simon told the driver that we needed the ‘sensitive’ materials to be taken to the airport. The distance from the printing headquarters to the airport was thirty to forty miles [thirty-eight to sixty-four kilometers]. During that time in China, there were many roadblocks on the way to the airport to check documentation. Though there were several roadblocks between us and the airport, we were never stopped once. As we drove up to the checkpoints, the police and soldiers saluted us and allowed us to pass without ever checking the cargo.

“When we arrived at the airport, we had another problem: There was no way to fly this cargo to Beijing on any of the shipping routes. We had looked into all the different options, and nothing was working out at the airport. Simon looked at me when I was at the peak of my frustration and said in perfect English, ‘No problem.’

“While he was in school—something I believe God had planned all along—on one side of him sat the future commanding officer of the southern armed forces in China, and on the other side sat a boy who would become the director of China’s largest cargo company. Simon called his other friend and told him he had ‘top-secret’ military cargo that he needed to be flown to Beijing. His friend said that he would arrange it right away. Within minutes, we had the military truck pull onto the tarmac of the heavily guarded airport.

“I was standing below the plane just in awe. I had never seen the nose of a plane open up like that. The truck pulled up to the plane, and the soldiers worked together with the crew to load up every single box of Bibles. I was not allowed to fly with the cargo, so I walked inside the airport and got on the next flight to Beijing.

“I called Brother Yun and our other friends who still live in China today to come and help us at the Beijing airport. There were thirteen people in Beijing waiting for the plane to land. I wish I

had brought my camera! These Chinese brothers were hiding behind trees and watching the planes intently as they came in, trying to see if the plane with the Bibles was landing. It was late in the evening, and Brother Yun and the rest of the team had brought several vehicles to help with transportation. To get into the cargo area, they had to register their names. They all registered with fake names.

"Small vehicles came, pulling a train of carts loaded with the Bibles. Sitting next to the driver of one small vehicle was Simon. He was just smiling and laughing as if we were all having the best time of our lives. I opened the back door of one of the carts loaded with Bibles. As I opened the door, I noticed that the big red Chinese characters for 'Bible' had been written on the box. I looked at the other boxes, and they, too, had been written on. All of the boxes had the words *Shengjing* written on them in enormous bright red ink. Immediately, I thought we had been compromised.

"Simon! Look! Someone has written the word 'Bible' on all of these boxes."

Simon began laughing. This guy was really having the best time of his entire life.

"I did that," Simon said. "As the soldiers were loading and unloading God's Word, I took out a red marker and put the word 'Bible' on every box."

"Why? Why would you do something like that?"

"Because," he explained, "I wanted to see if God was truly with us."

"Please do not ever do that again."

"Before morning came, we had loaded all of the Bibles into privately owned vehicles and were able to ship them out all over China to Christians who were hungry to have the Word of God. Not one Bible was lost from that operation.

"The miracles, of course, did not stop there. They happen every time we do a Bible printing. A few months after that miraculous airlift, the situation changed when one of the delivery company

workers was loading Bibles and a box broke open, revealing the illegal contents. Once again, Simon called his friend and asked for a temporary shelter for our ‘sensitive items.’ The army trucks came and picked up all of the cargo and took it to an ammunition depot guarded by around fifteen thousand troops. I have often wondered if the government will ever know what critical role they play in the domestic Bible printing we continue to do to this day.”

In the chapters that follow, you will learn much more about how God is moving in the Chinese underground House Church.

—Eugene Bach

*This book is dedicated to all those
who will join God in what He is doing
through the Chinese House Church.*



Part 1:

Uncovering the Mystery



A Bible delivery van in the 1990s



Brother Ren with Peter Xu and his sister



*Enoch Wang, Zhang
Rongliang, and Brother Yun*

1

The Crimson Cross

Brother Yun and others representing the Chinese House Church travel the globe to share what God is doing in China. As they do, people ask many questions, such as “What is the ‘House Church?’” “What is its origin?” “What is it like?” “Where is it headed?”

At the same time, there is a great deal of misinformation about the Chinese church being disseminated in many nations around the globe, and it is causing people confusion. Some individuals spread this misinformation maliciously for personal gain. Yet most of it is spread ignorantly by unwitting foreigners or overseas Chinese who have had the wool pulled over their eyes by the Chinese government.

Some would have us believe that there is no House Church in China! Others would have us imagine that Chinese believers are just a ragtag group of unorganized country bumpkins making bumbling and misguided attempts at preaching the gospel. (These stories tend to come from groups that value the number of advanced theological degrees a pastor has more than they do his calling from God.) Still others will go as far as to say that the House Church is an outdated, irrelevant nuisance to Christianity in mainland China because there is now complete freedom of religion there. (This is the official party line fed to many unsuspecting foreigners.)

A main purpose of this book is to dispel such rumors—hopefully, once and for all—as well as to share with you the “Back to Jerusalem” vision embraced by the Chinese House Church. This vision is to preach the gospel to the unreached peoples in the eastern provinces of China and in all the countries between the border

of China and the city of Jerusalem. My coworkers and I at Back to Jerusalem International are partnering with the church in China as it seeks to fulfill this vision.

We invite you now to join us as we open the Bamboo Curtain and step into the hearts and lives of the millions of believers who make up the Chinese House Church.

THE “RISING RED STAR”

China is a place of mystery and fascinating discoveries. In the minds of people the world over, the very name of this country invokes images of dragon dances, clanging gongs, the Forbidden City, and rich culture. The Chinese are a proud people with a long history that has left fingerprints all over the development of humankind.

Not only is the history of the Chinese people rich and vibrant, but the future of the Chinese people has never looked better. Today, China is considered to be the “rising red star” in the East that is beginning to challenge the world’s largest superpower. Children across the world, from India to the United States, are starting to learn Mandarin Chinese as their second language, and previously scoffed-at traditional Chinese medicine is being embraced worldwide.

China’s rapid growth can be seen almost everywhere in the nation. Those who travel to China end up finding cities that are developing faster than the travel guidebooks can keep up with. The nation’s expansion is a major issue in news stories and political debates around the world.

AN “EXPLODING” MOVEMENT OF GOD

However, behind China’s rapid economic growth is a movement that cannot be seen on a guided tour of Beijing’s ancient streets and monuments. You will not learn about it while studying Chinese at the Beijing Language and Cultural University, nor will it be addressed in Western political debates. Yet the movement is

one of the largest in the world and is shaping every facet of China today.

The underground house churches of China (collectively referred to as the Chinese House Church) are exploding at a phenomenal rate. The Chinese church is one of the greatest miracles in modern history. Never before have so many people in such a short time left one belief system for another without a hostile takeover. Lives are being completely transformed every day by nothing more than the gospel of Jesus Christ and the display of His miraculous power. Many experts claim that there are about thirty thousand people coming to Christ in China daily. That is a shockingly large number of people, coming from every age group, ethnic group, and income level.

As China rises in global economic prowess, the Chinese are making increasingly more money and enjoying more freedoms than ever before, but true happiness and fulfillment are managing to evade them. The expectation of finding happiness in riches, mixed with atheistic materialism, is leaving many people feeling empty and without purpose. China has indeed become a world superpower, but her fast-paced economic development has led many of its citizens to search for a joy and purpose that cannot be purchased in the local market nor copied and sold beside Rolex knockoffs in the back streets of Shenzhen.

Chinese parents are scraping together money to put their children through the very best schools in China or abroad so they will have a chance at grabbing some of the new money in China's burgeoning business world. The better schools allow children to have special opportunities not available by any other means in China, so doting parents are more than willing to do anything to get them into those schools. The parents often go into debt, work twelve-hour days every day of the week, and pour all they have into their one child so that he or she may take advantage of every opportunity for career advancement. It is thus a serious blow to the entire family when their little emperor or empress becomes a

Christian, leaves the competitive rat race, and forsakes all to serve Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Amy (not her real name) is a prime example. She is an only child and was the first in her family to attend a university. Both of her parents worked for the Communist government. Her mother was an auditor and her father a family planning official who enforced China's infamous one-child policy. They used all of their combined resources to put their daughter through one of the best schools in Jiangxi Province, and Amy eventually received a degree in international business. However, during her time at the university, she was introduced to Jesus Christ and ultimately became a Christian—and a radical one, at that.

Amy left the big cities—ripe with opportunities for a girl with her prestigious background—and instead went to work for a small hotel in the rural area of Guangxi Province. She did so in order to preach the gospel to the ethnic minorities living in that area. Her reputation began to grow as she preached the gospel to everyone she came in contact with. Soon, her passion for the gospel grabbed the attention of some underground House Church leaders who wanted to meet with her. Two representatives visited her at the rural hotel where she was working and heard about her vision to preach the gospel. They were surprised to find that Amy did not even know it was illegal to preach Christ in China. Even as a Chinese, she had never heard of the underground house churches. Amy quit working at the hotel that very day and dedicated her life to serving beside underground Chinese Christians. In only a couple of days, she found herself in Sichuan Province helping the earthquake victims through the efforts of the underground House Church networks.

Amy later traveled to another city to help the underground House Church and moved in with a foreign missionary family. Soon after her arrival, in love with Jesus but completely unaware of what was or was not illegal in her own country, she began to go out into the streets and proclaim the message of salvation. She then made evangelistic tracts and handed them out throughout the city.

Thinking it would be helpful for people who got saved through the tracts and needed more information, she wrote the exact contact information of the Western missionary family on the back of every tract. Needless to say, the Western missionary was alarmed and told Amy to act wisely in a country where it is illegal to proselytize.

Clearly, the underground House Church movement is therefore not only mysterious to people outside China, but even to those like Amy who live there. A singer named Zhao Ming (also called Benjamin), who is very well-known inside China, became famous when he and his family won the Chinese version of *American Idol* by singing a Christian song about loving one's family. He went on tour in Finland with Brother Yun, a well-known Chinese evangelist whose life has been documented in the popular book *The Heavenly Man*. During that time, Zhao Ming read Brother Yun's book and was blown away by learning of the torture and sacrifice that he had endured in China for being a follower of Christ. "I have never heard before of those things happening to Christian believers in China," Ming said.

The fact is, every single day, thousands of people are coming to Christ in China, and the vast majority are doing it illegally. The best estimate we have that accurately depicts the current situation is that there are 130 to 150 million believers in China, and the majority of them belong to the illegal underground churches.

DEMYSTIFYING THE CHINESE HOUSE CHURCH

As I wrote earlier, people all over the world are asking questions about the underground church in China. They want to know the answers to questions such as the following: "What is the Chinese House Church?" "Why is that term even used?" "How did it start?" "How can you prove it exists?" "Who does it consist of?" "Where is it?" "How does it continue to grow at such an astronomical rate?" "Why are the Chinese experiencing a revival when other countries on their borders are not?"

My coauthor, Brother Zhu, and I will attempt to answer each of these questions while demystifying the Chinese House Church. We hope that anyone who reads this book will be able to gain a basic understanding of what exactly the underground House Church of China is.

As the story unfolds, we include examples and personal testimonies from underground Chinese Christians whenever possible to help better explain certain ideas and concepts. It is important that the Chinese themselves be able to describe in their own words what they have witnessed in their nation. None of these stories has been shared in a book before, and many of them had never left the borders of China. Although these stories are factual, the names of people and places have often been changed to protect the safety of individuals who are still living and/or serving in China.

Many of the laws and restrictions on Christians in China are not easy to explain and can be controversial. There are not many official laws restricting Christians that are specifically spelled out in the same way that they are enforced. In addition, the reader must keep in mind that China is a huge country where certain laws are enforced to differing degrees from province to province and even from city to city. A believer living in Beijing may tell you that the laws are such and such, but a believer living in Chengdu may argue that the laws are different, while a Christian in Lhasa, Tibet, will say something about Chinese law that is entirely distinct from the other two.

Chinese politics are simply not easily understood by outsiders. The average tourist quickly discovers this fact when he or she tries to go between Hong Kong and the mainland. What country is Hong Kong a part of? China. Then why can an American or a European go to Hong Kong for three months without a visa but need to pay an exorbitant price for a mere thirty-day visa to cross the border into China proper? What kind of unified country has customs and immigration offices between two of its own regions?

Another example is the issue of international driver's licenses. It is no problem for most foreigners to drive in Hong Kong; they just need to use their foreign driver's license. However, just across the border in Shenzhen, foreigners are not allowed to drive until they go through the complicated and expensive process of getting a Chinese driver's license. On paper, Hong Kong is indeed a part of China, yet the laws, banking system, currencies, and, to a large degree, government systems, are all completely different. China is officially referred to as one country with two systems, but the difference between the two sides of the border is quite remarkable. Macau is another part of China that has completely different laws and policies from those of either Hong Kong or the rest of China.

Even more baffling is China's relationship with Taiwan. China says that Taiwan belongs to China, and the United Nations also takes that stance. In fact, the vast majority of the world—the United States included—affirms that claim. Yet Chinese officials cannot set foot on Taiwan's soil without permission from the independent democratic Taiwanese government.

Taiwan also has its own laws, banks, and currency. It even has its own military, which is primarily set up to defend itself against the very country that claims to own it. Much to China's outrage, America even provides Taiwan with highly secretive military equipment and training, and also frequently conducts joint military exercises with the Taiwanese.

If all those issues seem complicated and confusing, so, too, is the situation of Christians in mainland China. As stated earlier, the laws, practices, and degrees of enforcement are different from province to province, and they also change from year to year. There will be people familiar with China who will undoubtedly try to challenge the authenticity of some of this book's content, even citing their own experiences as validation, but let the reader beware of anyone who is considered to be a "China expert." The country is so complex that the term is an oxymoron.

THE FRUIT OF AN UNDERGROUND SEED

What China's underground house churches are experiencing at present is a combination of many different factors. One significant factor is that today's Chinese Christians are standing on the shoulders of those who sacrificed their lives in China many years ago. The current spiritual explosion is the fruit of a seed that sat underground, unseen by the outside world, for many years. This seed fought to survive through the cold, harsh winter, was watered by the blood of a myriad of martyrs, and today has grown into a mighty tree bearing so much fruit that the branches are bent and almost breaking under the weight.

At the same time, it is interesting to note that the very people who brought the gospel to China and sacrificed so much were also the very people who needed to leave before the seed could fully sprout. Foreign missionaries provided much of the support and strength for the Chinese believers in the early days. The same strength and faith that contributed to the revivals of today were a hindrance to the spiritual growth of the Chinese church in that time.

Missionaries brought with them doctrinal and cultural systems that crippled the growth of the indigenous Chinese church. Control of the church through monetary means is rarely talked about in the Bible, but because of flawed human nature, even the saintliest missionaries often wielded the power of money over the power of the Holy Spirit.

The early church in China was fascinated by the ingenuity, education, and wealth of the foreign missionaries. Since the majority of the missionaries were highly skilled in trades like medicine, they were considered by many to be superior. Even some missionaries considered themselves superior to the poor heathens they came to proselytize. However, the Chinese Christians didn't

realize that these seemingly superior qualities like knowledge and wealth were not due to nationality or ethnicity but rather were the by-products of cultures massively influenced by the gospel and teachings of Jesus Christ.

There were no differences between the missionaries and the Chinese in the human sense. The missionaries were just as vulnerable to disease, needed daily nourishment, and were subject to the same temptations as any human being. The missionaries and Chinese were both initially lost sinners in need of a Savior. The difference was in their cultural backgrounds. By and large, the Western missionary had been raised in a society formed by biblical ethics and morality. The Judeo-Christian understanding of the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom had helped to create a society that greatly benefited all its members. On the other hand, Chinese culture had been covered in darkness for generations under the influence of Buddhism, Taoism, and animism. This was the antithesis of light and biblical truth, and it created a dog-eat-dog society of degradation and brokenness where people were constantly oppressed.

Today, institutions of higher learning around the world often propound these ignorant and godless teachings under the auspicious title “wisdom of the East,” attempting to mask their religious nature as mere ancient wisdom. Far from it, the religions of the East are responsible for a great deal of the suffering that continues to this day, not only in China but throughout Asia. As international test scores in recent years have proved, the Chinese are in no way intellectually inferior to their Western counterparts. Rather, it is the errors of these dark religions that have counteracted their extremely resourceful and productive natures. It was the Light of the World that the Chinese saw in the missionaries of yesterday, and that same Light is now piercing through the darkness of China today.

THE “10/40 WINDOW”

China’s Christian population is currently growing, along with the nation’s economic influence, medical capabilities, educational development, technological breakthroughs, and even the refinement of its leisure activities. And, alongside the growth of everything else in the country, China is becoming increasingly engaged in world missions. The Chinese church is beginning to send out missionary teams to the most dangerous regions of Southeast and Central Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. They feel called to carry out the Great Commission in areas that Christians in the Western world have largely neglected or could not even go to if they wanted to. Chinese Christians are specifically targeting the “10/40 Window,” which refers to that part of the eastern hemisphere north of the equator between the ten- and forty-degree latitudes.

This vision is not unique to the Chinese but stems from the Great Commission as given to the first-century church. What makes this vision sound so novel today is that many churches in the West have lost sight of it. In many ways, the current Western missionary effort is feeding on itself, with many missions organizations becoming massive self-feeding mechanisms constantly trying to create a new fad movement. Like much of the Western church itself, missions has become a big industry that is stuck doing the same things over and over again but marketing them differently each time. The hottest new missions strategy becomes obsolete soon after it makes it to a PowerPoint presentation, but then it is just chopped up and reworked into something that sounds fresher for the next missions conference.

Once a “big name” walks out on stage with a new idea, a catchy slogan, or a clever missions idiom, we all want to buy his book, and organizations the world over basically copy and repackage it with their own logo prominently displayed. This practice may raise some financial support, but it often does very little to actually

make an impact for the advancement of God's kingdom. Missions seminars quickly turn into something akin to a high school pep rally, and money raised on "Missions Sunday" ends up going more to the domestic side of comfort enhancement than for true international outreach to the lost.

This harsh evaluation of the current common procedure among Western missionary efforts may seem sacrilegious, but after one has read a plethora of new books, attended numerous meetings, and read years of e-mails in relation to Western missions, it becomes apparent that most Westerners are focused on the *thought* of doing something good rather than actually doing it. The sad truth is that the only thing tangible about many of the Western missions organizations today is the money that they raise and the shiny new offices they spend it on.

All that being said, China still has many things to learn from Western missionaries. For generations, the West has been sending its young men and women to live, serve, and die in the most unforgiving foreign lands imaginable. The Western church has done and is still doing many wonderful things for missions that shouldn't be drowned out by the circus of strategists trying to market the newest missions trend. The Chinese need all the tools Westerners can give them in order to tackle the daunting task God has placed before them.

A Christian missions strategist now living in Dallas, Texas, who is helping with the placement of Chinese missionaries, sat with me in a restaurant one evening in 2011 and reflected on his own missionary experience: "I remember going to a missions conference in the 1980s where a famous missionary had come to recruit missionaries. The missionary stood up and began to talk about being seriously alarmed about the church in the West and the growing lack of interest for missionary work. He implored us to pray for the church in the West, because there was a growing trend of young people rejecting a life of missions, and, in his mind, if the West did not send the missionaries, the world would be lost."

He paused as he remembered the anxiety of that time and how ignorant people were of the sovereign God. “Little did that missionary know,” he continued, “that God was raising up a church in a country that the rest of the world had written off as a completely lost mission field, thinking it would have to be restarted in the future when the country reopened. Little did he know that God had plans to raise up a church in China and send more missionaries to the Middle East, Southeast, Central Asia, and Africa than had ever been sent in the history of mankind.”

BEHIND THE BAMBOO CURTAIN

China’s budding missionary movement was born out of a church that is largely unknown to people around the world. There is still great confusion about what God is doing behind the Bamboo Curtain, but it isn’t drastically different from other movements of God in history. Not unlike the past missionary movements of the West, China’s surge of missionary activity has been born out of revival fires. There are many similarities between the revivals in China and those that have taken place around the world in recent history, one of them being an intense passion for global evangelism that has sparked multiple missionary endeavors.

There are also many characteristics that are unique to the Chinese church. As will be seen, many pearls distinct to the House Church were formed under intense pressure from conflict, suffering, and persecution. Chinese Christians like to say that the history of China runs red, like the crimson blood that was shed on the cross for man’s sin. China’s cross is crimson—as if stained by the blood of the countless saints who died so that her church could rise. This book is the story of that rise.

May your faith be challenged and may your heart be set aflame for Christ as you read about God’s tremendous work in the Chinese House Church.