



## A P P E N D I X ONE

*This appendix is included for two reasons. First, its Indian author, Dr K.P. Yohannan, has worked extensively in Asia as a missionary with the poorest of the poor. Secondly, he is highly experienced and respected, having written over 200 books. The organisation he founded, and now directs, Gospel for Asia, supports more than 13,500 national missionaries and operates 133 Bible Schools with more than 6,900 students.*



*These qualifications place him in a unique position to comment on the interplay between proclaiming the gospel and social action in missions. This commentary makes compelling reading. My prayer is that we take to heart, and to the Lord, what Dr Yohannan is saying, and re-evaluate how we do missions. This chapter from Dr K.P Yohannan's book, *Revolution in World Missions*,<sup>1</sup> is reprinted with permission.*

### **A Bowl Of Rice Is No Substitute For The Holy Spirit.**

BY DR K.P. YOHANNAN.

To keep Christian missions off balance, Satan has woven a masterful web of deceit and lies. He has invented a whole system of appealing half-truths to confuse the Church and ensure that millions will go to hell without ever receiving the gospel.

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<sup>1</sup> I recommend reading his brilliant book, *Revolution in World Missions*, which is available free from [www.gfa.org](http://www.gfa.org)

Here are a two of his more common inventions written as questions:

***How can we preach the Gospel to a man with an empty stomach?***

A man's stomach has nothing to do with his heart's condition of being a rebel against a holy God. A rich American on Fifth Avenue in New York City or a poor beggar on the streets of Bombay are both rebels against God Almighty, according to the Bible. The result of this lie is the fact that, during the past 100 years, most mission money has been invested in social work. I am not saying we should not care for the poor and needy. The issue I am taking to task is losing our primary focus of preaching the gospel.

***Isn't "mission work" meeting the physical needs of people ? Isn't it equal to preaching?***

Luke 16:19-25 tells us the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Of what benefit were the possessions of the rich man? He could not pay his way out of hell, nor could his riches comfort him. The rich man had lost everything, including his soul. What about Lazarus? He didn't have any possessions to lose, but he had made preparations for his soul. What was more important during their time on earth? Was it the care for the "body temple" or the immortal soul? "For what good is it for you to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit your very self?" (Luke 9:25).

It is a crime against lost humanity to go in the name of Christ on missions to do social work but to neglect calling people to repent – to give up their idols and rebellion – and follow Christ with all their hearts.

***Isn't it true that people will not listen to our gospel message unless we offer them something else first.***

I have sat on the streets of Bombay with beggars – poor men who soon would die. In sharing the gospel with many of them, I told them I had no material goods to give them, but I came to offer eternal life. I began to share the love of Jesus who died for their souls. I told them about the many mansions in my Father's house (John 14:2) and the fact that they could go there to hunger and thirst no more. "The Lord Jesus will wipe away every tear from your eyes," I said. They would no longer be in any debt. There would no

longer be any mourning, crying or pain (Revelation 7:16, 21:4).

What a joy it was to see some of them opening their hearts after hearing about the forgiveness of sin they could find in Jesus!

That is exactly what the Bible teaches in Romans 10:17, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Substituting the Holy Spirit and the gospel for a bowl of rice for will never save a soul and will rarely change the attitude of a person’s heart. We will not even begin to make a dent in the kingdom of darkness until we lift up Christ with all the authority, power and revelation that is given to us in the Bible.

In few countries is the failure of Christian humanism more apparent than in Thailand. There, after 150 years of missionaries showing marvellous social compassion, Christians still make up only two percent of the entire population.<sup>2</sup>

Self-sacrificing missionaries have probably done more to modernise the country than any other single force. Thailand owes to missionaries its widespread literacy, first printing press, first university, first hospital, first doctor and almost every other benefit of education and science. In every area, including trade and diplomacy, Christian missionaries put the needs of the host nation first and helped usher in the 20th century. Meanwhile, millions have slipped into eternity without the Lord. They died more educated, better governed and healthier, but they died without Christ and are bound for hell.

What went wrong? Were these missionaries not dedicated enough? Were their doctrines unscriptural? Perhaps they did not believe in eternal hell or eternal heaven. Did they lack Bible training, or did they just not go out to preach to the lost? Did they shift their priorities from being interested in saving souls to relieving human suffering? I know now it was probably a little of all of these things.

While I was seeking answers to these questions, I met poor, often minimally-educated native brothers involved in gospel work in pioneer areas. They had nothing material to offer the people to whom they preached – no agricultural training and no medical relief

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2 David Barrett and Todd Johnson, *World Christian Trends, AD 30-AD 2200*, Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2001, p.429

or school programme. But hundreds of souls were saved, and in a few years a number of churches were established.

What were these brothers doing right to achieve such results, while the others with many more advantages had failed? The answer lies in our basic understanding of what mission work is all about. There is nothing wrong with charitable acts – but they are *not* to be confused with preaching the gospel. Feeding programmes can save people dying from hunger. Medical aid can prolong life and fight disease. Housing projects can make this temporary life more comfortable, but only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can save a soul from a life of sin and an eternity in hell!

To look into the sad eyes of a hungry child or see the wasted life of a drug addict is to see the evidence of Satan's hold on this world. He is the ultimate enemy of mankind, and he will do everything within his considerable power to kill and destroy people. But to try to fight this terrible enemy with only physical weapons is like fighting tanks with stones.

When commerce had been established with the Fiji Islanders, a merchant who was an atheist landed on the island to do business. He was talking to the Fijian chief and noticed a Bible and some other paraphernalia of religion around the house. "What a shame," he said, "that you have listened to this foolish nonsense of the missionaries."

The chief replied, "Do you see the large white stone over there? That is a stone where just a few years ago we used to smash the heads of our victims to get at their brains. Do you see that large oven over there? That is the oven where just a few years ago we used to bake the bodies of our victims before we feasted upon them. Had we not listened to what you call the nonsense of those missionaries, I assure you that your head would already be smashed on that rock and your body would be baking in that oven."

There is no record of the merchant's response to that explanation of the importance of the gospel of Christ. When God changes the heart and spirit, the physical changes also. If you want to meet the needs of the poor in this world, there is no better place to start than by preaching the gospel. It has done more to lift up the downtrodden, the hungry and the needy than all the social

programmes ever imagined by secular humanists.

These words of Jesus should haunt our souls: “You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and then you make that convert twice as much a child of hell as you are” (Matthew 23:15). **A.W. Tozer** said it well in his book *Of God and Man*: “To spread an effete, degenerate brand of Christianity to pagan lands is not to fulfill the commandment of Christ or discharge our obligation to the heathen.”<sup>3</sup>

Just before China was taken over by the communists, one communist officer made a revealing statement to a missionary, John Meadows: “You missionaries have been in China for over a hundred years, but you have not won China to your cause. You lament the fact that there are uncounted millions who have never heard the name of your God. Nor do they know anything of your Christianity. But we communists have been in China less than ten years, and there is not a Chinese who does not know... has not heard the name of Stalin... or something of communism... We have filled China with our doctrine.

“Now let me tell you why you have failed and we have succeeded,” the officer continued. “You have tried to win the attention of masses by building churches, missions, mission hospitals, schools and what not. But we communists have printed our message and spread our literature all over China. Someday we will drive you missionaries out of our country, and we will do it by means of the printed page.” Today, of course, John Meadows is out of China. The communists were true to their word. They won China and drove out the missionaries. Indeed, what missionaries failed to do in 100 years, the communists did in ten. One Christian leader said that if the Church had spent as much time on preaching the gospel as it did on hospitals, orphanages, schools and rest homes – needful though they were – the Bamboo Curtain would not exist today.

The tragedy of China is being repeated today in other countries. When we allow a mission activity to focus only on the

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3 A.W. Tozer, *Of God and Man*. Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, Inc., 1960, p.35

physical needs of people without the correct spiritual balance (i.e. proclaiming the gospel), we are participating in a programme that will ultimately fail.

However, this does not mean we must not be involved in compassion-type ministries that reach out to the poor, needy and hurting people all around us.