Articles by Ray Guyatt

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How Shall They Hear (June-July 1966)

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Ray Guyatt (A Review of Missionary Work in Hong Kong)

Zeal and knowledge are not always fellow-travellers these days any more than they were in Paul's day (Romans 10:2). Young workers beginning their missionary career usually possess amazing zeal coupled with abysmal ignorance whilst those of us who have weathered a decade or more of missionary experience are more noted for our knowledge than our zeal.

It was to meet the inevitable ignorance of young missionaries — an ignorance that can result in unwise and even fatal mistakes — that a course of lectures was prepared for the post-war recruits to Japan. I had the opportunity of reading the record of these lectures some years ago, whilst on a visit to Japan. In the main, the lectures were concerned with Shintoism, Buddhism and aspects of Japanese religious life. But it was the first lecture that so greatly impressed me. Based on Romans chapter 1, it swept aside all sentimental ideas about "the poor deluded heathen," and showed that, basically, the nations have deliberately rejected what witness God has given them, holding down the truth in unrighteousness, refusing God in favour of idols and turning to a pathway of evil and filthiness.

To maintain a right balance, we must remember that our God is Love and He is Light. Men tend either to stress the love of God at the expense of Light, or Light at the expense of Love. God is Light and He will judge righteously. What He will do with those who have never

heard the gospel, we do not know. We leave that in the competent care of our all-wise and righteous Father. To hold that since God is Love, therefore those who have not heard the gospel must all be destined for Heaven, is to make two mistakes. Firstly, it ignores the truth that God is Light. Secondly, it implies, perhaps unwittingly, that all missionary work and gospel preaching is a distinct menace and, indeed, a hindrance to the purposes of God. Some Chinese, to whom I have spoken of God's way of salvation, have told me that they had never before heard the gospel. If it were true that in their ignorance they were bound for Heaven and if, after I had told them the gospel, they chose not to believe, they then became bound for hell. In this case, it were better never to preach the gospel to those ignorant of it —but that would contradict the clear instruction of Scripture.

Those without Christ — whether animists, atheists, agnostics, or ancestor-worshippers — are lost. Our responsibility as God's people is to reach them with the emanicipating and redeeming message of salvation. The prime concern of missionaries is not to explore new lands or climb mountain ranges, but to reach men. Exploration and travel are but means to an end. The size of countries, the density of population, the nature of the terrain, the presence or absence of roads and rivers, and allied considerations will serve to indicate, in general terms, the methods God's servants will need to adopt to reach the people.

Missionaries from assemblies are at work in about 65 countries. Only half a dozen of these countries are smaller in area than Hong Kong, but over thirty of them have a smaller population. A large proportion of Hong

Kong's population is concentrated in a few square miles, probably the densest population in the world. Commendable efforts are being made to reach "every creature" or, at least, every home. But the majority of the people remain outside of Christ. Ninety-nine per cent of the population is Chinese, speaking a variety of dialects, Cantonese being the ligua franca. Half of the population is under fifteen years of age and, whilst many of these seem to be turning away from idols and the old traditions, they are left with a dangerous vacuum.

There are rural areas with isolated villages and a few large towns. In an effort to reach more isolated coastal villages, Mr. Decker and Mr. Browne have used a launch "Elim" to good advantage and, despite the more integrated life of villagers, a few turned to the Lord. The Oriental Missionary Society have made a concentrated effort on inland villages, using Scripture Gift Mission portions and Emmaus courses for follow-up work.

The population now approaches four million and many of these are refugees from mainland China or the children of such refugees. The Government prefer not to use the term "refugee" and their very commendable resettlement programme aims at rehousing all those who live in squatter huts or sub-standard buildings, whether or not they are technically "refugees." It was on Christmas Eve 1953, shortly after Geoffrey Bull had come out of China, that he and I stood on the verandah of our home on Hong Kong island, looking across the harbour, we saw the reflection of a huge fire which left ten thousand people homeless. It was this disastrous fire which spurred the Government on to launch its resettlement programme.

Resettlement has taken two forms. In some areas, known as cottage resettlement areas, wooden or stone cottages have been erected in tidy rows with careful provision for firefighting. In one such district — the Chuk Yuen Resettlement Area — the peace Clinic was opened in 1956. Miss Wilks has taken charge of this work. Each day, the patients hear the gospel before being treated. Seventy or eighty patients are seen daily, sometimes over a hundred are seen in a single day, and, occasionally, two hundred. A woman with severe T.B. came to the clinic in its early days. She and her husband then attended the Sunday evening Gospel Services. Returning to their hut, they decided to turn to God from idols and were amongst the first to be baptized a few months later. An assembly has been formed with a flourishing Sunday School and Bible Classes, Women's Meetings and other activities. Several members of the Women's Meetings and Bible Classes were amongst those to obey the Lord at the most recent baptism. Miss Hickson works with Miss Wilks in the Peace Clinic and Miss Richards, who is still busily engaged on language study, gives help one morning a week. For several years, Miss Wilks has been exercised about a new clinic with a hostel for cripples. It is anticipated that building will commence shortly and be completed by the middle of 1966. This new work will be in a new district where nearly a million people are living.

The other type of resettlement is in the form of five-or seven-storey blocks of single-roomed flats. There are now a number of Resettlement Estates each composed of a number-of such blocks, in which people live in very crowded conditions. The flatroof-tops of these blocks are set aside for schools. Mr. and Mrs. Decker and Miss

Whitehead are engaged in running several such schools. Sunday Schools and other meetings are held in two of these. Mr. Decker anticipates having charge of a new five-storey, partly subsidized, school in the near future.

Miss Hollingsworth and Miss Whitehead run a rural school. Miss Cheong of Singapore is assisting in this work and is running the Sunday School, and doing visitation work in the district.

Radio reception is not good in Hong Kong because of the many hills in and around the Colony. Many people have Rediffusion loudspeakers and have no means of tuning to radio stations, although transistor radios are becoming very popular. Reception of F.E.B.C. programmes has not been very satisfactory, although a new wavelength introduced this year has improved the situation and there is a small response from listeners in Hong Kong.

The literacy rate is high and a number of Christian groups are engaged in producing and providing literature. My wife was assisting the late Mr. Robinson in such work, after she left China in 1948. Now we are concentrating mostly on the Emmaus courses in English and Chinese. Mrs. Scott was assisting in this work for several years, until her furlough, and now Miss Painter is helping. A number have professed salvation and a few have been added to the assembly meeting in Chuk Yuen. Amongst these is Mr. Lui Po Hang. When Mr. and Mrs. Browne were on their way to Hong Kong, they met a nephew of Mr. Lui in Singapore. This lad asked them to visit his father and tell him the gospel. Several of us did this and we introduced him to an Emmaus gospel course. In due course he completed “What the Bible

Teaches" and attended a students' meeting to receive his certificate. He brought his brother, Mr. Lui Po Hang, with him. That evening Mr. Lui Po Hang trusted the Lord as Saviour and was later baptized.

His brother has since been baptized also. Mr. Lui assists in the Peace Clinic and in the Scripture Gift Mission office. During my furlough, Mr. Browne took over the representation of the S.G.M. and obtained the present office, close to the Emmaus office. During recent sickness and absence, Mr. Knowles has helped in this work.

We are increasingly aware that, as the Lord's servants, we need to listen intently for His instructions and allow Him to use us as His channels, so that the work may indeed be the Lord's work. That this may be so is our earnest prayer and we would invite you to pray with us to this end.

“Ye Shall Find Rest” (Aug-Sept 1966)

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Which was the easier for the Israelites — to shake off the shackles of Egypt and cross the Red Sea, or to cross Jordan and conquer the heathen nations in Canaan? Very simply, the answer is that both were impossible to the Israelites in their own strength. It took forty years in the desert for Moses to learn the impossibility of deliverance being achieved by fleshly effort. The Israelites had to learn the same lesson. Well might they tremble on the shores of the Red Sea, surrounded as they were by mountains, sea, and soldiers, until Moses said, “Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord” (Ex. 14.13). Their experience forty years later, in attacking the small town of Ai without God’s presence with them, is sufficient to show the impossibility of the task of subduing Canaan. But, it would be equally true to answer the opening question by saying that both were possible to the Israelites when God was with them.

There is always the danger of pressing Scripture types beyond the realms of reason and clearly beyond what the Spirit of God intended. Someone has put it, “Wonderful things in the Bible I see: Things put there by you and by me!” Whilst we keep this danger in mind, we shall remember that these things were “written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor. 10:11). The Holy Spirit, in the New Testament, shows us some of the lessons that He wants to teach us from the Old Testament.

We must bear in mind that God’s intention was not merely to release the Israelites from Egypt, but to bring

them into the promised land of rest. Moses, in Deuteronomy 6.23 puts it simply, “He brought us out from thence (Egypt), that He might bring us in.” God’s purpose was to bring them out of bondage, through a necessary short period of instruction and testing in the wilderness, and into rest. The forty years of wandering were completely outside the Divine purpose and were made necessary for the simple reason that Israel could not believe that God, who alone had delivered them from bondage, would similarly deliver the inhabitants of Canaan into their hand. Listen again to Moses, “If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them? Thou shalt not be afraid of them: but shalt well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt; the great temptations which thine eyes saw and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched out arm, whereby the Lord thy God brought thee out: so shall the Lord thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid” (Deut. 7:17-19).

Rightly, we condemn the “gospel of works.” God’s Word has made it abundantly clear that salvation is “not of works, lest any man should boast,” “Not by works of righteousness which we have done.” Clearly and emphatically we tell the unsaved that there is only one way of salvation, by faith in the finished work of Christ. “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Now, when God saves a man from the bondage of sin, does God intend that that man should spend the rest of his life on earth wandering, striving to please God and failing, striving to overcome temptation and failing, striving to break off evil habits and failing? Does God not intend to bring that

man into rest? Hebrews 3 and 4 make it abundantly plain that there is a rest for the people of God. What is that rest? “He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His” (Heb. 4:10). It is a ceasing from my own effort and a trusting in what He has done:

Simply to cease from struggling and strife,

Simply to walk in newness of life;

Glory be to God.

In other words, I can no more become holy by my own effort, I can no more resist temptation by my own effort, than I could have saved myself by my own effort.

This was the mistake the Galatians made. They had heard the gospel of the grace of God and believed. But now they were trying to succeed in the Christian life by law-keeping, by their own works. “Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Gal. 3:3.). Is the God by whose stretched-out arm you were delivered from Egypt unable or unwilling to bring you into Canaan’s rest? Having saved you without your needing to do anything except believe, is He now asking you by your own effort to try your best to live the Christian life? When Paul said, “Work out your own salvation” (Phil. 2:12), he added, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (verse 13).

That is the glorious truth — Christ in you, living in you, overcoming sin in you, victorious in you. Let Him do the work whilst you just rest in what He is doing in you. Not only did Christ die for me, I died with Him. “I” could never save my soul, “I” could never live the Christian

life. “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20).

Oh that we would enter into this wonderful truth even as we entered, by faith, into the family of God! How many of us groan over failures to do what we know we should do, living in Romans chapter 7, and forgetting that we died with Him (Romans chapter 6) and that now we walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. “Christ in you” (chapter 8).

I may tell an unbeliever that he should not swear; he should not get drunk; he should do good. But I know that he lacks the power to carry out these injunctions. Even though he succeeded in these and a hundred other kindly acts, he could still not save his soul and be delivered from the power of sin. Similarly, I may tell a believer that he should be pure and loving and godly. But I know he cannot do this of himself and that, even if he tries his best, it will never lead him into rest. The New Testament has a wonderful balance of doctrine that often seems missing in much of our preaching, I fear. Even when believers give their consent to the fact that they can do nothing of themselves, they still tend to cling onto the lurking feeling that they should try to keep the commandments of God as best they can. “I” can no more keep the commandments of God now than I could in my unregenerate days. It is not “I”, but Christ living in me who can keep God’s commandments and bring pleasure to the heart of God.

As I face the Christian pathway with its temptations, its enemies, its tremendous possibilities for good, its wonderful opportunities of bringing blessing to others, I need first of all, by faith, to believe that “I” was crucified

with Christ, “I” died and now it is not “I” who live the Christian life, but Christ who lives in me. As, by faith, I accept that, I shall enter into rest — the rest of ceasing from my own works and resting in His work in and through me. “He that believeth on Me,” said our blessed Lord, “as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38). What untold — and often, to us, unknown —blessing will flow from us when we stop trying to live the Christian life and start believing that it is “not I, but Christ liveth in me.”