



The Bulletin of the U.S.
Center for World Mission

Dedicated to:
"A Church for Every People."

Why Sending Money Does Not Work As Well As Sending People by Ralph Winter

Money can be more easily misused than people. Missionaries have enough trouble sometimes with what have been called "rice Christians," that is people who welcome the missionary just as the crowds welcomed Jesus after He fed the 5,000.

But suppose there is no missionary, and there is merely a letter with a check in it. That is a problem even if the letter goes to the board of a duly constituted "national" Christian ministry, enough of a problem so that the India Mission Association (IMA) will not admit Indian mission agencies as members if they receive more than half their funds from abroad!

Furthermore, the largest mission agency in the IMA is the amazing Friends Missionary Prayer Band (FMPB) with close to a 1,000 missionaries being supported by some of the poorest populations in the world. Can you believe it? The FMPB will not accept a cent from abroad. Probably a single large U.S. church could provide their entire FMPB missionary budget. And why not do that? Because they value spiritual discipline more than money. They have prayerfully concluded that relying on foreign funds would spiritually damage their 30,000 prayer partners. These dear, poor people are members of the FMPB because they are willing to pray all night one night a week and give 20% of their meager incomes.

My wife and I lived for ten years among the poorest large (1/3 of a million) population in the Western hemisphere. In our town the believers were gradually building a church out of adobe brick which they could make themselves. When it came time to put the roof on, they needed hard currency to pay for the corrugated iron sheets. A Christian tourist lady was moved by this need and offered to pay the necessary \$300. (In the USA a comparable situation would be like a congregation of 100 members getting a gift of \$300,000.) But then they needed a floor. They discreetly inquired about another \$300. It came through, a bit reluctantly. But now they had good reason no longer to skimp and save for their church. Their own giving ceased...for years to come. I cannot blame them.

--RDW