



Charity Christian Missions

Newsletter

August 2001
Volume 5 • Number 4

Republic of Bénin

Population: over 6,000,000



Republic of Benin, West Africa



Who Will Go and Tell?



Motor Bike Gas Station



The Streets of Cotonou



Charity Christian Missions

"For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles;for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts."

Malachi 1:11

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Mission Addresses

Dear Supporters,

We thank God for all of your interest and support, in finances, letters of encouragement, and prayers.

We as a mission operate by faith in the Lord of the Harvest. We believe that HIS work done HIS way will not lack in HIS blessing. All of the missionaries are fully supported by Charity Christian Missions. We do not ask them to raise a certain amount of funds before sending them to the field. We simply send them by faith and trust God to meet the financial needs.

Again, may God richly bless you for your faithfulness in serving the Lord with your gifts of love.

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Exploratory Trip to Benin and Ghana Update

by *Emanuel Esh*

In this Missions Newsletter we have a special report on Benin. Also, we have further surveyed Ghana in more northern and eastern regions.

B E N I N

Three exploratory trips have been made to Benin, the most recent one being May 2001. The country is wide open, but the spiritual resistance is strong. It houses the world capital of voodoo, which is religion steeped in witchcraft or demonism.

Charity Christian Missions is planning to start a mission in Benin, along with Grace Christian Fellowship in Bainbridge, NY. Our goal is to begin the work together, and, in one to three years, they would be able to take the full responsibility. One

of their families is taking a nine-week language course in preparation to go. This work will need a strong prayer base and a solid church behind it. It would be a great blessing to the brethren at Grace if you would write them a letter of encouragement and support as they take this step of faith. Address your letters to:

GRACE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP
107 Dingman Hill Rd
Bainbridge, NY 13733

We have seen the effects of an active foreign mission out-reach, in the local church, and in the lives of the young people who have gone on short term teams to Ghana. We desire to see other fellowships catch a vision also.

G H A N A

We are excited as we watch the Gospel spreading among the Dagomba and Konkomba tribes. I was thrilled as the missionaries shared during my visit there about the zeal of the natives as they go from village to village, on their own accord, preaching the gospel. They have been zealously affected for the Lord Jesus Christ. What a blessing to see the joy of the Lord on their faces! Many are hearing for the first time the good news of salvation by faith, in the shed blood of Christ. This puts a great responsibility on the missionaries as they realize that this is the first time for some of them to hear.

Due to rough roads, limited mechanical expertise, used parts, and old machines, the missionaries have been experiencing a lot of down time with the vehicles. The mission board agreed to purchase two newer, four wheel drive Land Rovers from Germany. These have been shipped to Ghana to replace the older ones.

A hearty **THANK YOU** to all that support this ministry. We are very grateful to God for your support. We trust God to continue to supply, as we move ahead into new fields. Your letters of encouragement mean a lot to us.

Emanuel Esh
Chairman of the Board



THE REPUBLIC OF BENIN

A B r i e f S k e t c h o f t h e
N a t i o n
a n d i t s S p i r i t u a l S t a t e

by Mathew Hinkle

“Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.” Acts 28:28



Benin. If you were asked to find it on a map, could you do it? If you were asked to “pray for Benin”, would you have any idea how to pray? What do you know about this little nation? What is its history? Its government? Its spiritual needs? In order to effectually pray and feel the burden of this needy country, it is good to know something of these things. With God’s blessing then, I would like to take a brief survey of Benin, so that those who love the cause of Christ’s Kingdom may be suitably informed and armed in the grand work of praying for, brooding over, and reaching out to this land. The salvation of God is to be sent unto these Gentiles also. May we be a people prepared to go to Benin with the gospel and to prove God’s promise that *“they will hear it!”*

§ The Geography of Benin

Benin (formerly called Dahomey) is a small, nar-

row African state (about the size of Tennessee) which points like a fist towards the Sahara Desert. It is bordered on the west by Togo, on the north by Burkina Faso and Niger, and on the east by Nigeria. To the south, Benin touches the Gulf of Benin—part of the Atlantic Ocean. In the south, Benin used to have tropical rain forest, but now it is somewhat marshy and only semi-forested. Beyond a narrow coastal belt, the land is fertile and well-cultivated. This gradually gives way to grassland with small trees as one goes further north, and the land becomes increasingly infertile. Interspersed throughout the land there are small hills, but in the northwest, there is a beautiful range of low “mountains” called the Atakora Mountains. Benin has only one large river—the Ouémé—which runs down the middle of the country, but it also shares the Mono River as part of its western border with Togo, and the mighty Niger River as its border with Niger. In the marshy area of the far south, there are two larger lakes, Lac Ahémé, and Lac Nokoué. The far south has an equatorial climate with an average of 51 inches of rain per year. This comes in two wet seasons, from March to July, and October and November. As one moves north, there are two seasons—a very dry period from October to May accompanied with much dust (the *harmattan* winds from the Sahara) and a wet and humid May to October rainy season bringing about 35 inches of rain. Compared to other West African nations, Benin does not receive as much rainfall. Currently Benin has six *départements* (provinces) but the country is soon to have twelve. In the south, bordering the ocean, are the *départements* of Mono (capital Lokossa), Atlantique (capital Cotonou, population of Cotonou 600,000), and Ouémé (capital Porto-Novo, population 200,000). In the middle of the country is the *département* of Zou (capital Abomey, population 80,000). In the north are the two large, more sparsely inhabited *départements* of Atakora (capital Natitingou, population 65,000) and Borgou (capital Parakou, population 120,000). Porto-Novo is the official national capital, but Cotonou is the administrative center, transportation hub and port for Benin. Other important towns are Ouidah (the center of voodoo worship), Djougou, and Malanville on the far northern border with Niger. (Warning! In checking the many resources on Benin, I found that many of the demo-

graphic figures varied—sometimes drastically. I have used the best estimates that I could find!)

§ A Historical Sketch of Benin



Like most African states, the boundaries of the country of Benin are totally artificial. In the 1500's, the Kingdom of Dahomey began to come to prominence in what would now be the southwest of Benin. By the 1700's it was an empire, with Abomey as its royal city. Further north, the Bariba had a large state (called Borgou) with Parakou, Kandi, and Nikki (the Bariba royal city) as the centers of their civilization. Porto-Novo (which took its name from a Portuguese trading post) in the southeast was also an important state which often conflicted with Dahomey. The Kingdom of Dahomey carried on a large enterprise of selling slaves in exchange for guns. They had a corps of fierce women warriors (called Amazons by the Europeans) and were a warlike people. In 1842, France founded a fort at Ouidah in order to help curtail the slave trade, and the French influence began to spread. In the 1860's, Porto-Novo, and then Cotonou, came under French protection from the English and the Dahomeyans. By the 1890's, Dahomey and France were in serious conflict, and went to war in 1892. Certainly part of the conflict was due to French

imperialistic desires to forestall German expansion from Togo, and British expansion from Nigeria, but the Kingdom of Dahomey was still engaging in the slave trade, and also still practiced human sacrifices—both of which the French wanted to stamp out. Dahomey gave France a stiff fight, and, yes, the French Foreign Legion had to fight the Amazon warriors. By 1894, all the fighting was over, and France went on to claim territory further north of the former Kingdom of Dahomey, to the extent of the current borders of Benin. During the colonial era, the area we now know as Benin was called Dahomey, and was a part of French West Africa. Before World War I, Togo was a German colony, and in 1914, French and native troops from Dahomey helped to conquer it. After World War II, France began the process of granting Dahomey more self-government, until the country gained its independence on August 1, 1960. This date is still the national holiday.

Through the 1960's, Dahomey suffered through several coups and changes of government. It was a time of chaos and instability. In 1972, Major Mathieu Kérékou (b. 1934) led a coup by young officers, and proclaimed Dahomey a Marxist-Leninist state. In 1975, the name of the country was changed from Dahomey to the "People's Republic of Benin," and a red star was added to the middle of the national flag. It was a one-party Marxist state, and although there were 3 coup attempts over the next 15 years, the country became much more stable politically, if not economically. Mathieu Kérékou, unlike most of the Dahomeyan politicians, was from the north and was animist/Muslim in his religious background. There is somewhat of a dichotomy in that although his administration encouraged more of a sense of tribal roots in the people, yet in the education system, French was extensively taught as a means of unifying the people. Also, he promulgated laws to suppress the witch doctors and cult-like groups. Kérékou, as somewhat of a benevolent dictator, was president of his Marxist African state until 1991. In 1984, almost all of the political prisoners were freed. As the decade wore on, the neo-Marxist economic policies were increasingly ruining the country, so that in 1989 and 1990, economic trouble and unrest forced Kérékou to give up the reins of power. In 1990, a new constitution provided for a multiparty, elected national assembly, and also an elected president. Also, the name of the country was again changed to the "Republic of Benin," and the star was

dropped from the flag. Benin peacefully divested herself of her Marxist past, but some of the memories remain. If you go to Cotonou, the prominent public square in the city is the "Plaza of the Red Star." Seen from above, this is a gigantic red communist star.

In the 1991 election, Nicéphore Soglo defeated Mathieu Kérékou for president. Kérékou had publicly apologized for the abuses that took place during his regime, and was granted amnesty by President Soglo. Soglo was an economist who had worked with the World Bank and the IMF in the past. He pushed through tough austerity measures for Benin, which were what the country needed, but his reforms were very unpopular. In 1996, the election was again between Soglo and Kérékou, and this time Kérékou won. The transition in Benin from a Marxist one-party state to pluralist democracy has been seen as a model and an achievement for Africa. The country has been seemingly doing well with democracy, and although its economic woes are still great, there has been political stability. (I recently spoke with a man at the Benin embassy in Washington, and he specifically asked prayer for President Kérékou, and for Benin's ambassador to the US, for wisdom as to how they can ease the yoke of poverty on the people of Benin.) Earlier this year (2001) elections were held again, as they are every five years, and Mathieu Kérékou again defeated Nicéphore Soglo. This will be Kérékou's last 5-year term, as under the constitution a president can serve a maximum of only two terms, and must be under 70 at the time of the election. (Kérékou is now 69.)

§ The People of Benin

The nation of Benin has over 6 million inhabitants. During the political turmoil of the '60's, it was one of the poorest nations in the world. Happily, events have changed for the better, but the war on poverty, and for a better standard of living is still the major national concern. The 1998 per capita GDP was \$1,440. (By comparison, Ghana's per capita GDP is \$1,530, Togo \$970, Nigeria \$1,380, and the US \$28,600.) Nearly 60% of the people are engaged in some form of low-level agriculture. The nation has few natural resources, although there is a little offshore oil drilling. Corn, yams, millet,

palm oil, and the like are typical products. The country did achieve self-sufficiency in food production in the 1970's, so that the specter of starvation that haunts other African nations is not found here. The literacy rate is variously reported as between 35-50% even though schooling is free and compulsory. Obviously the younger age groups would have a greater percentage of literacy. I was quite pleased to find that the children I met on the streets of Cotonou could read the French tracts I gave them. Still, only 61% of eligible children are enrolled in primary school. Literacy in the various

Togo. Spread throughout the northeast (Borgou province) are the Bariba with 340,000 people and another 60,000 in Nigeria. Sorting through all the ethnic and linguistic information on Benin (which is often contradictory) is a blessed frustration. I have taken from many sources, and given the best estimates I could deduce! Again I beg you to keep that in mind with all the facts and figures presented in this article!



bags of charcoal

tribal languages ranges generally from below 1% to 5%.

In this tiny nation, there are 52 languages used, although I am only going to list those that are spoken by 5% or more of the population. One of these languages has only 800 speakers! French is the only official national language, and I found its use well diffused in the parts of the country I visited. The major language and tribal group of the south is Fon (or Dahomean), encompassing 1,200,000 people. Several other southern languages are related to Fon, and many more people in the south speak Fon, who are not actually of the Fon tribe. (Fon is the language of the old Kingdom of Dahomey.) The Aja have about 360,000 people in the southwest and another 110,000 in Togo. Also in the south are the Aizo, with a population of 227,000. There are 465,000 Yoruba in the southeast who spill over from Nigeria. The Gun in the southeast have 320,000 people with more in Nigeria. Throughout the north and northwest is a large nomadic group—the Fulfulde—with 280,000 people in Benin and 48,000 in

§ A Sketch of the Religious State of Benin

I have purposely saved the most crucial aspect for last so that all of the previous information about history and tribes and languages and the lay of the land can be easily assimilated and understood in reading this most important of all topics. In Benin, there are virtually no atheists. Everyone believes in the supernatural. Figures vary a little, but the basic concept is that Benin is 70% indigenous religious beliefs, 15% Muslim, and 15% nominal Christian (mostly Roman Catholic). The only African nation with a higher percentage of indigenous religion is neighboring Togo. Clearly these two nations represent a very needy area for evangelism. Indeed, I am not sure what criteria are used to determine this, but Benin is called the least evangelized of sub-Saharan nations. The traditional religious beliefs (animism) take on many different forms of spirit and ancestor worship. Also, Benin is the home of the religion of Voudou (voodoo). The town of Ouidah in the far south has been the seat of Voudou worship for centuries. From Benin, voodoo was exported to the Western Hemisphere by the slaves that were brought over. In addition, there are many syncretistic groups that will try to mesh various forms of animism, Christianity, and/or Islam. One of these that I saw throughout Benin is called the Heavenly Christian Church. The land is under great spiritual darkness—even bad by African standards. In speaking with the overseer of the Deeper Life Bible Churches in Benin (who is from Nigeria) he compared the spiritual warfare

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in Benin to that of other West African states. They had made far less progress in Benin than in other areas such as Ghana, and he attributed this fact to the spiritual atmosphere of the nation. He said, quite soberly, that if someone wanted to come to Benin as a Christian worker, they needed to be well-practiced in spiritual warfare. Take heed. This opinion came from a very experienced man.

As mentioned, Islam is followed by about 15% of the people of Benin, but its presence is weak. It is

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mostly found in the north. As I traveled through the north, I saw many villages with nice, new, green and white mosques built by Libya. (Libya also financed the building of a mosque in Cotonou.) The real tragedy, though, was that I did not see nice, new churches (or any churches for that matter). These buildings are of course to impress people with the power and influence of Islam, and get them to make a commitment to its false tenets.

As best that I could tell, Catholic missionaries first came to the Kingdom of Dahomey in the 1790's. Most

of the 15% of “Christians” in Benin would be Roman Catholic. This was brought in primarily by the French influence, and did little to bring truth and light to the land. The first Protestants in the area were Methodist missionaries who arrived in 1843. Methodism, although small (40,000 adherents) is still the largest Protestant group in the land. True to the missionary zeal of the early Pentecostals, the Assemblies of God arrived in the, up to that time, totally unreached north-west (Atakora province) in 1921. They have over 30,000 adherents, a Bible school, and supposedly over 200 churches *and* preaching points. SIM (formerly Sudan Inland Mission) entered Benin in 1946, concentrating their work in the northeast. Since independence in 1960, many other groups have entered the land (including the already-mentioned Deeper Life Bible Church from Nigeria), but most of the work has been concentrated in the easily accessible south. The Southern Baptists began work in 1970 and have about 20 churches. Nominal Protestants represent about 4% of the population, and evangelicals less than 1%.

You have already read about President Mathieu Kérékou. It would be appropriate here to say one more word about him. As already mentioned, he was born in the north in 1932, with basically animist roots. He, as an army major, overthrew the government in a coup in 1972, and became the dictatorial head of Marxist Benin. At some point in the early 1990's though, he was led to the Lord by a Foursquare minister, and has been an earnest Christian ever since. Sometime after taking office in 1996, he appeared at a world missionary gathering in South Africa (?), and appealed for the organizations to send missionaries to Benin. I have been to the website of a newspaper from Cotonou, and have read excerpts from Kérékou's speeches, and comments about him. He is not at all afraid to show himself a Christian, and to liberally pepper his speeches with Bible quotes. He was reelected in 2001, and so his presidential term is until 2006. So, we have set before us a very needy land with a political climate that is very friendly to, and encouraging of, missionary work.

Naturally, the questions come to those who are serious-minded about missions concerning where to go, and who will go. As for where to go, this must be a matter of much prayer. Please then do pray for wisdom on this subject. The north is under-represented vis-à-vis churches and Christian workers, but the south has

far more people and better communications. The usual missionary wisdom is to follow on the heels of where the translators have been. As already mentioned however, indigenous literacy is not great in Benin. The following native languages have full Bibles already translated: Bariba, Boko, Gun, and Lokpa. These have a New Testament translated: Dendi, Ditamarri, Fon, Mokole, Yom, Waama. This information came from an interview with the SIL representative in Cotonou in 1998, and so should be relatively correct. Other works are, of course, in progress, as, for instance, an entire Ditammari Bible should be nearing completion soon. As I write this article, I have a treasure next to me, a Bariba Bible, only completed in 1996. I will never forget when Ross Ulrich gave a copy of a Bariba Bible, just like this one, to a man named Brisso Mama, the head of the *gendarmerie* (national guard) in Pèrèrè. He began to read Genesis 1, was very pleased, and asked us if we would come start a church in his home village of Gome. *Oh, Jesus, the need is so great. Give us wisdom as to how to take Your great commission even to this uttermost part of the earth.* As for who would go, the two main requirements would of course be an earnest spiritual life and spiritual maturity, and also the knowledge of the French language. (For which see my other article in this issue titled *La Francophonie*.)

§ Conclusion

Benin. Now, reader, you know more about this little nation than do most of the people in the world. Because it is small and poor, it is quite overlooked. But God Almighty has not overlooked Benin and its 6 million people. It is a field providentially opened up for the harvest, *at this very time that we live in, like it never has been before.* We have God's impressive word, that if the word of salvation is sent to the Gentiles of Benin, we may *know* that they will hear it. If we will send laborers, God will absolutely, without fail, open their blind eyes, cause them to hear, and save souls. Awesome thoughts for us to ponder and pray over, and I do ask for your prayerful consideration of Benin. Pray for the leaders of churches here in the US as they consider this opportunity. Pray for the mission board of Charity Christian Missions, for the wisdom and spiritual sensitivity to respond to this call from Benin. Pray

also (Oh! may it not become trite and hackneyed to us!) that the Lord of the harvest will touch the hearts of those he has called to this work, and that they will respond. Let us not tarry nor lose the vision of this open door of opportunity! Amen. o

"...we have set before us a very needy land with a political climate that is very friendly to, and encouraging of, missionary work."

BENIN, WEST AFRICA

Survey Report

by Steve Clark

I left Gushiegu around 6 a.m. for Tamale on Monday morning the 21st of May. It is about a two-hour drive to Tamale where I had some business to do before going on to Accra. I finished up my things in Tamale and left at 1:30 pm. I arrived at the Presbyterian guesthouse in Accra at 10 pm and realized I had made excellent time. The next day I did some shopping in the capital city of Accra. I also had some work done on the car because I wanted to have it in good condition for our trip to the country of Benin.

Wednesday dawned another beautiful day in Accra. I had arranged with brother Ross to pick me up at the guesthouse on his way to Tema. He was getting some work done on his car there in Tema. We took a taxi back to Accra and did some business and visited as we spent the day together. In the evening we went to the airport to pick up brothers Emanuel Esh, Daniel Esh, and Eric Cherry. Their plane landed at about 7:30pm. All of the totes of vitamins and medicines were passed through without any problems. We all

went back to Tema where we had reserved some rooms to spend the night. We stayed up late, visiting and praying for our survey trip into Benin. With the Togo and Benin maps stretched out on the bed we asked God to direct, guide, and help us to find out the government regulations of starting a mission work in Benin, and also to find a tribe of people where Bro. Eric and his wife could possibly be sent to. We all know how God wants to lead His people, so we were crying out to Him and committing our trip to Him. I don't know

about the rest of the brothers, but I woke up several times that night anticipating the morning wake-up time. I was awake at 3:30am before my alarm went off, so I got up, took a shower, and got ready to go. We were hoping to leave by four but I think it was about 4:30am before we finally left the motel.

Crossing the border into Togo was very eventful. As we drove up, those standing around could tell that we didn't know what we were doing, or how to cross the border. It had been three years ago since I had been across that border and I didn't remember the procedure, I only remembered the hassle. We had about six or eight men come to our car windows offering us their assistance. Some wanted to change our money into the French cefa, others wanted to be our guide to take us to the various different places both on the



the streets of Cotonou

Ghana side and on the Togo side. We did change some money and then a helper was chosen for us. A few times we were told to pay a bribe, but when we refused it caused a delay, but eventually we were passed through. The rest of the border crossings on the whole trip went very well, and we were thankful to the Lord for that.

As we drove along the coast we were impressed with all the raised-bed farming. They grow a lot of food that way. It would be good for Ghana to take some lessons from their neighbors. We could tell we were nearing the business capital of Cotonou because of the increase in small motorcycles. As we came into the heart of the city, motorcycles were everywhere. It reminded me of a trail of ants curving, swerving, bending, turning, stopping, and going. When we pulled up to stop at a traffic light, the motorcycles filled in ahead of us, beside us, behind us, and in every nook and cranny. As the light turned green everyone was off, and a cloud of blue smoke lingered in the direction the traffic had gone. Many of the taxi motorcycle drivers wear a bandanna around their face so they don't inhale so much of the exhaust.

It was still early afternoon, and we were hoping we could

make some contacts in the city to find out what we as a mission had to do to start mission work in Benin. It seemed like we were



a "floating village"

just driving around in circles and not accomplishing a whole lot. Then we had a small breakthrough. I called a number that I had from my first trip to Benin. A Christian man by the name of John answered the phone, and he spoke English. I explained what we wanted to do. He said that "he would help us." We met him and discussed the plans for the next day, which was Friday. He did help us a lot, and to make a long story short (having spent most of the day traveling from one government office to another), we found out that we don't have to do anything except come to Benin and set up a residence. Benin gives someone coming into the country up to a one-year stamp on their visa to come and stay. That person can establish a residence, learn the language, preach, and start a church. Then the mission or the church can be registered

if that is their desire. Wow, so much different than Ghana. It took us one and a half days to find out that we don't have to do anything, but that was OK.

Saturday morning we started traveling north on very nice roads to the city of Parakou. We were hoping to find needy tribes of people where there hasn't been much Christian work done among

them. We found out that there are a few tribes of people like that, but they are very staunch Muslims. We would stop different places and talk to missionaries, pastors, and Peace Corps workers, all the while praying that God would direct us. In Parakou we went to the SIM mission facility. We met with the director and he was a lot of help. He told us of a language group where there is basically no Christian work. That is the Dendi people. It is a trade language from countries north of Benin; people who have migrated down for trading. The Dendi language over the years has pretty much swallowed up the original language of the area, making a different dialect of the Dendi, flavored with the original language. There is a New Testament translated into the Dendi language but those in Benin reject it because of the



merging of the two languages. They are very strong Muslims and very hard to penetrate. He also said that there were some smaller tribes along the Togo boarder who were also pretty much unreached.

It was interesting talking to the SIM brother in Christ. He had been in Benin for a number of years. I think it was 25 or 30 years. SIM has a translation program, a literacy program, a radio program, and is also involved in church planting. I saw the radio program in a whole new light as he was explaining it to us. They have many radio programs each week on local FM stations. Here are the language groups that they are preaching to: the Fon who are traditionalists; the Fulani and Kote Koli who are Islamic; the Dendi whom I have already talked about who are very strong Muslims; the Yom, Lakpa, Bariba, and Yoruba who are all Islamic mixed with voodoo. They plan to begin to broadcast into Titamari, who now have a Bible completed in their language, and the Ife where some missionaries are

now working. They have a large outlay of money as they are preaching in those local languages every week. Many of the tribes they are preaching to are very closed to Christianity, like the Dendi, but some people are listening. I see how God can use those broadcasts as a tool to break up the hard soil of those Islamic people. It is not going in person like the Great Commission would demand, but it is laying some groundwork and hopefully softening some hearts for the time when someone can go, preach, teach, and baptize.

Monday morning we started moving west. I won't be able to tell you all that happened, but I will touch on a few things. We went to a town called Djougou. There we saw some women completely covered from head to foot in black attire. You couldn't see their face, eyes, feet, or hands. It was a very strange sight seeing those black, ghost-like figures walking through the town. There was also a lot of road construction going on around the area. I

don't know if it was funded by Arab countries, but most every village where the new road passed, there was a brand new, very brightly-painted mosque. We were told of some Bible translators who were working with a tribe of people along the Togo border, so we decided to go south and talk to them. We drove down to the town of Bassila where we spent the night. As we reached the town we asked someone if they knew where the missionary's house was. We were directed to a house where some Peace Corps workers were staying. We were told by a young man who was watching their house that they had traveled somewhere. Brother Eric who was our French interpreter throughout our trip asked this young man if he knew where the missionaries stay. He said he did, and he got into the car to show us the place. We also found out that the missionaries had gone somewhere and were not expected back for a few days. So it looked like our trip down to Bassila would be for nothing. As we were standing in front of the missionary's house this young man, Sourkoua, started speaking English to us. He had learned English in school, but he said that all his classmates didn't like English so he isn't able to speak it to anyone. I thought he spoke English pretty well so we were asking him many questions. The dominant tribe in that area is the Anii tribe. They are for the most part Muslims. Sourkoua was from a different tribe and area but had moved there many years before with his parents. He

was raised as a Roman Catholic, but his parents had just started going to the Assembly of God Church. He said that he didn't want to change churches just because his parents had, but he wanted to be very sure in what he did.

He took us to a place where we could spend the night. After we got our rooms I was talking to him more about his life. He told me that he had been in another town north of Bassila and was in a boys' group that he liked very much. He called it "the boy scouts." I figured out he was talking about the Boys Scouts and asked him what they do. He said, "If there is someone sick, we go and visit them trying to cheer them up. Also, if there is someone in need we will help them." He said, "There is a lot of prostitution, and we tell the girls that it is not good." The prostitution he was talking about is from the road construction workers who were bringing the new road and the brightly-painted mosques. They also turn many of the schoolgirls into prostitutes, and this greatly concerned Sourkoua. I asked him who was their leader, and he told me he was the leader. He said, "After I returned to Bassila, I started a Boy Scout group here." I asked him how many boys are in the group. He told me twenty-two. My mind was racing as he was telling me all this. Here is a young, unconverted man of 24 years, visiting the sick, helping people in need, speaking and teaching against sin, and has organized 22 other young men to help him. I was thinking this young man would make an

excellent pastor some day.

He had to leave and go back to the house where we picked him up. I invited him to come back that night so we could talk more. I went back and told the other brothers all that had transpired and Daniel Esh said, "Maybe we could lead him through to salvation tonight." The four of us sat outside praying, visiting and waiting for Sourkoua to come back. We were just about to go to our rooms and retire for the night when he finally came. We did preach the gospel to him and told him of the love of God. I'm not sure how long we talked to him but it was a long time. He knew he was a sinner, he knew he was not born again, and he wanted to get his life right with Christ. I reminded him of what he said about not wanting to change too fast, and he said he was ready and that he believed. He said he had never heard this good news before. He knew

about Jesus Christ and even knew about His death but didn't know that Jesus died for his sins. His heart was prepared; God had been at work in this young man's life for a long time, and God sent us to this place when all the missionaries and Peace Corps workers were gone, just for this one precious soul. It was very beautiful as he put his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, we had asked God to direct us to where He wanted us to be, and to show us the tribe of people where He wanted us to place a missionary. Could this be God's direction? To the Anii tribe? Pray with us for direction as Eric Cherry and his family prepare to be sent, maybe to Benin, maybe to the Dendi, maybe to the Foodo, maybe to the Anii. Pray for Sourkoua and his newfound faith in Christ. Pray for the country of Benin, the home of Voodoo and the stronghold of Islam. □

Also available...

The Sunday after Bro. Emanuel Esh returned home from Benin and Ghana, he shared an overview and update of the trip at Charity Christian Fellowship. For an audio cassette of the message, ask for **Index# 2748, *Exploratory Trip to Benin***, from:

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La Francophonie

The Great Need of the Gospel in the French-speaking World

by Mathew Hinkle

“La moisson est grande; mais il y a peu d’ouvriers; priez donc le Seigneur de la moisson, qu’il pousse des ouvriers dans sa moisson.”
Luc 10:2

La *Francophonie* is a very useful, all-encompassing French word that means all of the countries and lands that have been affected over the centuries by the French language or French culture. In simpler terms, we could think of *La Francophonie* as the French-speaking world. And, oh, it is a big world! As we shall see in this article, there are multitudes of nations and vast areas of land and population that are under the influence of the French language, and desperately in need of the gospel of Jesus Christ. With the knowledge of French, a whole new world, which is comparatively little evangelized, opens up for the Christian who wants to serve Jesus and reach the lost with the Good News of his salvation. The purpose of this article then is twofold: **1.** To awaken a sense of the need and of the magnitude of the opportunity of reaching the French-speaking world with the gospel, and **2.** To stir up souls to give themselves to the learning of French in order to be able to walk through these needy doors. May Jesus Christ bless and sanctify this piece, which is the burden of many years, to effect these two great objects. Amen.

France’s Christian Heritage

Since France borders the Mediterranean Sea, Christianity was introduced into the area that we now know as France (it was called Gaul in Roman times) in the first century A.D. Irenaus, one of the chief names in second century church history, was bishop of Lyons, although he himself was from Asia Minor. In the ecclesiastical arena, the area that was to become France, like most of the western Mediterranean lands, gradually came under the sway of the bishop of Rome. Roman Catholicism became the dominant form of religion for France and has remained so to the present day.

Undoubtedly the most famous French Christian was John Calvin. During the time of the Reformation, he was exiled from France, and ended up in Geneva (which is the hub of the French-speaking part of Switzerland). But because he was French, and wrote and preached in French, Reformed (Calvinist) Protestantism began to spread through France—especially in the south and west. French Protestants were given the name of Huguenots. Their morality, industry, and success aroused the ire of the Catholics, and several religious wars were fought in France during the 1500’s as the Catholics tried to stamp out the Huguenots. There were several massacres of Protestants, the worst of which was the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre, which took place on August 24, 1572. This was a planned event in which thousands of Huguenots were killed, including many of their leaders. “All the Catholic monarchs of Europe showered the murderers with enthusiastic praise. The pope immediately ordered a Te Deum mass and ordered the striking of a magnificent medal to commemorate the ‘glorious’ day.” But persecution only caused the Huguenot cause to grow.

At last, out of the turmoil of the civil wars, Henry of Navarre (an avowed Protestant) became King Henry IV in the year 1589. Trying to bring peace to France, he somewhat insincerely converted to Catholicism and is famous for his remark that, “Paris is worth a mass.” Whatever you may think of his religious ethics, he was a wise ruler who did try to bring peace to France. In 1598 he promulgated the “Edict of Nantes” which largely gave religious freedom to the Huguenots. Henry IV was assassinated by a Catholic radical in 1610, but the Huguenots continued to enjoy spiritual and physical prosperity for a good part of the 1600’s. They truly were a leaven in France. Whereas the Catholics were largely immoral and careless, the

Huguenots brought to France morality, piety, and all the other virtues that flow from godly living. Even Roman Catholicism was not without its witnesses in the 1600's. The brightest name of French Catholicism—François de Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon—was writing and teaching right in the court of Louis XIV! Another pious and somewhat influential movement for reform in French Catholicism was a group known as the Jansenists with whom Blaise Pascal was associated.

But for the Protestants, things could not last. Envious of their success and growing power, Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes in 1685. It is a fateful year in French history—a year in which France lost her soul. The Huguenots, over the ensuing years, were forced to flee to Holland, Prussia, England, America, South Africa and other lands. France's loss was the gain of these other lands, as these people brought industry and piety wherever they went. That heaven was lost in France, and the country has never been the same since. A few Huguenots continued to straggle on through much persecution in the backwater areas of France, but the former glory was gone, and it has never been recovered.

France's Colonial Heritage

From the 1500's through the 1700's, France founded various trading posts and colonies in the Caribbean, the New World, Africa and India. During the wars of these eras, the colonies often changed hands between countries, but many areas stayed French long enough to acquire the French language and culture. Even though Canada was finally lost by France in 1763, Quebec remained thoroughly French, although it was in the hands of English conquerors. Louisiana was sold to the new United States in 1803 to finance the France of Napoleon I. Haiti was lost in a slave rebellion in 1804. Algeria was conquered from 1830 onward. In the 1850's, Napoleon III extended France's influence to include Indochina, and he tried to subdue Mexico in the 1860's but failed. During the late 1800's and early 1900's, French colonialism further expanded to include the South Pacific, China, and a vast portion of Africa. After World War I, France was given a mandate to govern Lebanon and Syria, although French influence had

been strong in the Middle East for more than a century. Indeed, it was largely the French who were responsible for building the Suez Canal in Egypt in 1869. After World War II, (chiefly during the '50's and '60's) France began to divest herself of her colonial empire, and grant independence to the various geographical units of that empire, so that she today has few actual possessions in other parts of the world. France, though, dealt wisely with her colonies both before and after their independence, so that they are mostly still very close to France in areas of economic, political, and cultural cooperation. The other former colonial powers have not had the success that France has had in this area.

I could easily go into more detailed history (especially with Africa) but the point is to show that under the providence of God, France has extended her language and culture to an immense section of the world—*La Francophonie*—encompassing hundreds of peoples and languages, which can now be reached by the means of the French language.

The Geography of *La Francophonie* Today

So, where are the French-speaking areas of the world today? It would certainly be easiest to show it on a nice map, with the French-speaking areas colored in. But lacking that, I will submit to you a list of the francophone areas. So, find an atlas, and follow this list of countries for a useful geographical exercise! Please note that for most of the areas listed, French is the main language. However, there is some differentiation as to how much it is used, for what purposes, or what other languages also share preeminence with French. Space forbids going into that much detail. So, please overlook the fact that some of these areas listed do not have quite the French influence that others do.

Europe

In Europe, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Monaco, Andorra, and the Val d'Aosta in Italy are all French speaking.

Africa

The nations that were former French colonies are Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Chad, Niger, Mali,

Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea-Conakry, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, Congo-Kinshasa (formerly Zaire)*, Rwanda*, Burundi*, Djibouti, Madagascar, Seychelles Islands, Comoro Islands, Mayotte, Reunion, Mauritius. (*These were formerly Belgian colonies, but because Belgium is French-speaking, they also speak French.)

Asia

France never had many possessions in Asia, and French is not the dominant language in any of the following areas, but it is still used in, and has had an effect on Lebanon, the state of Pondichery in India, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

North & South America

Areas with French influence are Canada (especially Quebec), Saint Pierre and Miquelon*, Louisiana, Maine, Haiti, Guadelupe*, Martinique*, and French Guiana*. (*These areas are considered an integral part of France—some-what like Hawaii or even Puerto Rico to the US.)

Additionally, France has many possessions in the South Pacific; the most famous of which are Tahiti and New Caledonia. For centuries, French was the language of international diplomacy, and French is still the international postal language. Taken together, this is a huge slice of the world (especially in Africa) that is accessible by learning the French language. Certainly to go to a French-speaking, third world country you may have to learn another indigenous language, but it is French that gets your foot in the door, and allows you to deal with government officials, customs, airports, etc. Just consider tiny Benin, which has over fifty indigenous languages, and yet almost anywhere you were to go in that nation, you could get along with speaking French.

The Great Need of *La Francophonie*

We have looked at the geographical extent of the French-speaking world, but now let us consider the great need for the gospel in these areas, beginning with France herself. For centuries,

France has been the seat of what the world calls “culture.” France has had a huge influence in the arts—especially painting and literature. There is probably no city in the world so famous as Paris. There is probably no monument so famous as the Eiffel Tower. And yet, with all of these accomplishments (and so many more), the nearly sixty million Frenchmen are mostly godless and on their way to hell. It is interesting how when we think of missions, we automatically think of “unreached people groups” back in some far-off jungle area. But consider—the vast majority of these sixty million Frenchmen *have never once heard the gospel message of salvation through Jesus Christ!* Here is a nation nearly the size of Texas, with a larger population than any African country except Nigeria and Egypt, and yet it is virtually unreached. The land has a tradition of a form of Christianity and many beautiful cathedrals, and many Frenchmen are reared in empty Roman Catholicism, but forsake even that for nihilism, atheism and the pursuit of self.

I once read that half of the *départements* (roughly counties) in France do not have any kind of Protestant witness. But wait, even much of any “Protestant” witness would be a dead liberalism. And where the few evangelicals can be found, there is much worldliness and compromise. I knew a woman who taught in the youth Sunday school class in what is perhaps the largest evangelical church in Paris. The church leaders specifically asked her to not talk about God so much in the class! They wanted entertainment for the youth. I have looked at the Paris phone directory, and in this city of *over ten million people*, I found a plethora of Catholic churches, and many cult groups, but the number of evangelical churches listed could have been counted on two hands. I know a French woman from Toul in the east of France. I asked her about the state of religion in her native region. She said that if people were anything religious, they were Catholic, except that the Jehovah’s Witnesses had been making great headway around Toul. She did not know of any Protestants in the area. *Oh, France, France! Long ago, you sold your soul to the harlot that sits upon many waters. May the Lord, the Living God, break your covenant with death and hell, and raise up apostles and prophets among you, to turn you back to God! Amen!*

Seeing then the religious state of France, and her disinterestedness in true Christianity, it is little to be wondered that those areas that were under her influence in the past would imbibe of the same spirit. Because France gave herself to Romanism, she has sent out very few non-Catholic missionaries in the past. Thus, any “Christianity” that was planted in *La Francophonie* was Roman Catholicism. France still does not send out many missionaries, so the French-speaking areas of the world are very under-represented with regard to missionaries or Christian workers compared to the English or Spanish-speaking nations. Largely, missionaries to former French colonies have been Americans or Britons who have learned French and then gone out. Quebec and Belgium (the other important Western, French-speaking areas) have religious stories similar to that of France, so that rather than sending out Christian workers, they themselves are in need of them. Interestingly, I read recently how some African, French-speaking nations are sending their missionaries to Paris and opening churches in old industrial warehouses! Amen! Without any vital European root to sustain Christian endeavor, *La Francophonie* has languished for decades and centuries. It still stands, in Europe and elsewhere, in great need of evangelism and of a witness of vital Christianity.

A Word about Quebec

As mentioned at the beginning, the purpose of this article has been twofold: **1.** To diffuse knowledge about the vast need of the French-speaking world for the gospel, and **2.** To trust that under God, some souls reading this will be pricked in their heart and will begin making the life-preparations to learn French, seek God for direction as to where to go, and then go! As part of this course, I would like to make a practical suggestion, which may or may not end up having much merit! Let us consider Quebec. It is a French-speaking area with a population of over seven million, and it is right in our back yard! The times that I have been to Ontario, I have made a point of asking about the spiritual needs of Quebec, and have found that it is very needy—much like France. Here then is a potentially fertile field, not only for evangelism, but also

for training in the French language. I would like to give out a simple challenge to our Canadian brethren. If you could band together, and start a mission work in Montreal or (even better) the city of Quebec, not only would that provide an outlet and focus for missions for your churches, but it could be set up so that short-term (one to two years?) workers from the States, who feel a call to learn French and go to the French nations, could come up and help in the work, while also learning French. In other words, create a missionary and linguistic training ground right next to home, while also reaching out to a lost and needy people. It would be much easier if such a work were started from within Canada, although I do not think that there would be a lack of helpers from the States! Ponder this, pray about it, and see what the Lord would have you do!

The quote from Luke 10:2 that headed this article comes from the excellent Martin translation of the French Bible. Unlike our English Bible that uses the word “send” the sense of this French translation (which is closer to the original Greek) is to pray that the Lord of the harvest would push out or thrust out laborers into his harvest! *May Jesus Christ, the only Savior, bless and sanctify this article and use it to thrust forth laborers into the needy francophone harvest field! Amen!*

The author and his wife have both studied French for years in high school and college. Their desire is to be fellow-helpers in seeing the gospel go to La Francophonie. For anyone who is sincerely interested in the subject, they would be happy to 1. provide basic information on how to go about learning French and the benefits of language training, and 2. provide a listing of French Bible translations (with comments on their usefulness) and where to buy them. They also have recorded dozens of French hymns (vocals and music) onto tape and CD (with more to come). They would send these recordings out to any who want to pursue the learning of French. These recordings are offered without charge to the serious-minded; if you are merely curious, please do not ask for them. Thank you. Contact Mathew & Nicole Hinkle at (602) 273-7104.

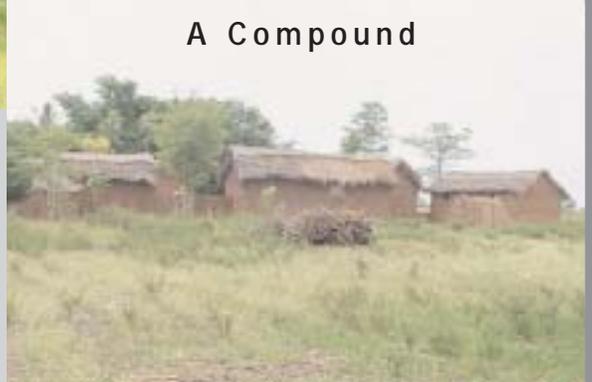
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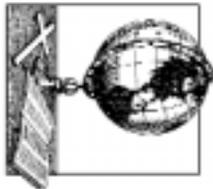
Am I a soldier of the Cross, a follower of the Lamb?
And shall I fear to own His cause, or blush to speak His name?

Must I be carried to the skies on flow'ry beds of ease,
While others fought to win the prize, and sailed thro' bloody seas?

Are there no foes for me to face? Must I not stem the flood?
Is this vile world a friend to grace, to help me on to God?

Sure I must fight, if I would reign; increase my courage, Lord;
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain, supported by Thy Word.

- Isaac Watts



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