



THE CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY
ALLIANCE

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**TREASURES
of DARKNESS**

Our Principles

BIBLICAL BELIEFS

PREMILLENNIAL PROGRAM

SCRIPTURAL METHODS

SPIRITUAL EMPHASIS

SACRIFICIAL SERVICE

EFFICIENT OPERATION

ECONOMICAL ADMINISTRATION



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TREASURES OF DARKNESS

A long line of men trudged wearily into the yard of the mission station. They were black men covered with the dust of many miles which lay behind them. The mission station was Toumodi in the Ivory Coast, French West Africa. There the missionary was training eight emergency evangelists, using as text books the newly-translated epistles to the Romans and Corinthians. The news that eight teachers were in town had penetrated the forests by the mysterious "bush telegraph," and now, from distant villages, came delegations such as this group of 50. Led by their village chieftain, they brought along their church records showing 80 adult Christians, and they asked the missionary, "How many members must we have before you can give us a teacher?"

The missionary replied that the entire Toumodi District with its 12 churches had only one teacher, and that he could not possibly get to their village within three months. This did not satisfy them, nor did the missionary's promise that he himself would come to them in six months. They kept repeating, "But we need a teacher to come and sit with us. To be baptized, we must be taught."

GOSPEL HIGHWAY

Finally the missionary said that if the seven miles of forest path from their village to the highway were a road, he might be able to come sooner. At once they began to talk excitedly, then bade farewell and departed. In just a few short weeks they returned to report that their road was completed. That very afternoon the missionary's car

rolled through the cuts, over the fills and across the rough-hewn bridges of a road prepared by a people hungry for the Word of God. Their joy knew no bounds. That day eight men and women prayed, and two other villages reported more believers.

Hundreds of young converts, but no one to teach them! How did such a strange and tragic situation come to pass? Well, some years earlier the C. and M. A. French West Africa Mission had pushed southward to occupy the Ivory Coast, and found it a wide open door. No longer did they have to contend with the entrenched Moslem forces as in the North. Instead they found scores of fetish pagan tribes eager to listen to the gospel.

After several survey trips into the unoccupied territory, the C. and M. A. chose the Baouli tribe, largest in the Colony, as the most suitable area in which to begin. Bouake, the chief city, was made the new mission headquarters, and stations were also opened in two other important centers, Mbayakro and Toumodi. The preaching of the Word, even through poorly equipped interpreters, brought immediate results. With the simple faith common to animist peoples, hundreds turned to God.

PROPHET HARRIS

This openness of heart and astounding response were similar to those witnessed earlier in another section of the Ivory Coast and the adjacent Gold Coast. There the black "Prophet Harris" from Liberia, in a few short years converted tens of thousands. Arrayed in a white robe and turban and carrying a light wooden cross, William Wade Harris denounced idolatry like a modern Elijah, and pointed to the Lamb of God like another John the Baptist. "Burn your fetishes. Worship the one true God. Get Bibles. Build churches and wait for

the missionary." Thus preached Harris till 40,000 were converted and 200 churches were built.

Working among the same sort of simple-hearted people, the new Ivory Coast Mission of the C. and M. A. witnessed similar results. Then came the tragedy. Before they had been able to train an adequate number of teachers, most of our missionaries were called home on emergency furloughs due to sickness or World War II. Hundreds of believers were left like the Ethiopian eunuch, unable to understand except some one teach them.

AFRICAN PHILIPS

But God raised up African Philips to teach some of the larger groups. One such was Abraham Koffi Ble (Black Abraham born on Saturday). During the Harris mass movement Abraham was converted far from his native forests while travelling down near the sea, and he hurried back to witness to his relatives and friends. Fetishes were broken, idols were burned, and a church built in Abraham's own home village.

Unable to rest, Abraham carried his witness to the nearest large city, Dimbokro, on the southern edge of the Baouli tribe. There also pagans were converted and a church built. Other Harris converts found their way north with the message, and, in the southern portion of the Baouli and Agni tribes, little groups of believers appeared shining as diamonds in the blackness of heathenism.

Having "turned from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven," they waited also for the missionary, as Harris had instructed them to do. Years later, when the first Alliance white missionaries arrived in Dimbokro, they were welcomed by the black lay preacher, Abraham, who presented to them

"the treasures of darkness," his first fruits among the Baouli and Agni peoples.

The white missionary could not stay at that time, but from the Bouake church Julius Roach, the consecrated cobbler who preached in five languages, came to help Abraham. Together these two laymen, during the ten years of the war and the post-war period, bore the heavy burden of the work in the entire Dimbokro section.

YEAR OF JUBILEE

And now we have come again to the year when those delegations filed into Toumodi mission compound to plead for teachers. That year Toumodi's lone missionary was responsible for 70 groups of believers. In the North many more pagans were turning to God in the grasslands surrounding Beoumi. But that year the prayers of the missionaries and the pleas of the natives were answered. For that year reinforcements finally began to come from America. And soon the Bible School was again training evangelists.

While the Spirit of God had descended, moving men to repent and seek salvation, the spirit of mammon had arisen, moving men to covet wealth and seek power. The Ivory Coaster had suddenly become a French citizen and a crass materialist, interested only in making quick, easy money. Coffee and cocoa were flourishing in Ivory Coast plantations, and bringing big prices in world markets.

Inevitably the new prosperity affected the Christians as well as the heathen, but not all the believers became covetous or worldly. For instance, Black Abraham had faithfully preached holiness of life and tithing of income to his flocks. Furthermore he practiced and exemplified both. One year on his plantation, the tithe on his coffee

alone was \$200.00, beside which he tithed also on his cocoa and livestock.

DEMAS RETURNS

Naturally young people were the most susceptible to the allurements of wealth. Indeed, it developed that volunteering for Bible School training became a genuine test of consecration, and those already in training were subjected to strong temptations. One young man in the Bible School had frequently been urged by his relatives and friends to come out and earn money. Finally, during the coffee and cocoa buying season, he yielded. Being brilliant and of a winning personality, he accumulated a goodly sum. But at the end of the season his partner's accounts were found short many thousands of francs, of which our former student had to make good 40,000. This and other misfortunes brought this black Demas back to God and to the school.

However, not all the financial difficulties of the Bible School students were punitive. One student while out preaching was robbed of all his clothes, including the indispensable blanket. Nevertheless he was comforted by the Lord's exhortation to consider the lilies of the field. The moral of the parable was made real to him when his brethren in Christ gave him, not one, but two new robes.

The much needed national workers are generally called to service long before they reach the Bible School, sometimes way back in their boyhood days in the French language primary school. Technically this school is not intended as a preparatory Bible School. Some of the boys come from Christian families, but equally as many come from pagan and Moslem homes. Rather it is intended as an open door of evangelism of the youth of the

land. Under missionary care during six of their formative years, and with daily Christian instruction, each year numbers are baptized and some later enter the Bible School.

FETISH REVIVAL

The same years which witnessed the Ivory Coast's new prosperity have also seen a resurgence of fetishism. In many parts of the Bouake District animistic devil worship has recently shown its darkest side. Village altars are again red with sacrificial blood. Long forgotten fetishes are reappearing. The ordeal of the poison cup is again practiced by village courts. Demon manifestations and demon possessions are on the increase.

One of the missionaries entering a town to preach for the first time, greeted the chief and asked permission to speak. Nearby he noticed an old man whose garments were covered with nuggets and pieces of gold. Although curious about this strange sight, the missionary's mind was occupied with his ministry as the people began to assemble. While the message was being delivered the old chief listened respectfully to the end, and then stepped forward and addressed his people as follows:

"Brethren, I am your chief. I am an old man. I have heard many things, but today I have heard the truth. If there are any of you who are disposed to follow this way, do so without delay. As for myself, I have walked the way of the fetish too long to change, but I will not hinder any of you who wish to change to the Jesus way." Later the missionary learned that the old gentleman with the gold decorations who had listened to the gospel from behind the fence, was none other than the high priest of the strong fetish sect, "Great Medi-

cine," who had just arrived in this village to introduce the new religion.

SATANIC POWER

Although this revival of fetishism might be considered a purely human effort by the crafty witch-doctors to tap the new sources of wealth, yet the missionaries see sinister significance in its having followed so closely on the heels of the mass movement toward God. Encounters with fetish manifestations indicate supernatural and Satanic influence.

From a distant village a pagan brought his Christian sister to the missionary for medical aid. Although her pulse and temperature were normal, she had not eaten or spoken in four days. She could move only her lips. Her jaws were tightly locked. Sensing something serious, the missionaries gathered round her for prayer. Rising from their knees, the missionary faced her and commanded her to open her mouth. She strained the muscles of face and neck to no avail. Again the missionary spoke, "In the name of Jesus, open your mouth."

Immediately the muscles relaxed, her mouth opened and, without a word, she turned and knelt in prayer. At first her prayer was unintelligible, but, as her speech cleared, she glorified God for her deliverance. Rising to her feet, she told her story. While cutting wood in the forest, she accidentally broke two fetish dishes in a grove. The owners demanded she apologize to the fetish and offer a sacrifice. This she said she could not do, being a Christian. Whereupon they became enraged and violent, threatening to take her children from her. Seizing the children, she fled as the fetishers placed a curse on her, so that on arrival in her home village she could not open her mouth. So marvelous was this manifestation of the power

of God over the power of Satan, that her heathen brother expressed his amazement saying, "Truly nothing ever before struck my mouth like this!"

BAOULI BLANKET

Now you have the background of our picture, let us paint the true subject of this sketch, the Ivory Coast Indigenous Christian Church, built of those living stones, the treasures of darkness. A Baouli Christian said to the missionary, "In our Baouli blankets all the threads are the same cotton, but some are white and others dark blue. All dark threads would not be pretty, nor would all white. Only as we mix the dark and light colors, do we have a blanket of which we may be proud. We need you and you need us here in Baouliland." That was the spirit in which the lay delegates and national workers met with the missionaries in 1951 and organized the Baouli Tribal Christian Church. Not only did the Africans assume broad responsibilities of self-support and self-government, but they also took up their share of the burden of evangelization in the unreached areas.

Some six months later the new-born church received its Pentecost. After a week's heart-searching ministry, the break came. Church leaders flocked to the altar seeking all that God had for them in the Person of the blessed Holy Spirit. The whole congregation joined in united prayer like the sound of a heavy shower sweeping through the forest. Old Paul Kwadio, a father in Israel, went among the young men laying hands on their heads and praying for each to be filled with the Holy Spirit, even as he had been. Eight of those young men gave up their worldly ambitions and went to the Bible School. Paul's subsequent ministry among the churches, teaching them to tithe, increased

their offerings 200 percent.

TRIBAL CHURCH

After another six months a second, greater conference was held in August 1952 when nearly 150 elders and workers from some 70 churches met in Bouake. With what wisdom they came to grips with the problems of administration. With what courage they took their stand on matters of morals and finance. With what seriousness they elected their tribal church officials. With what enthusiasm they decided to hold such a conference annually, and made it financially possible with a pledge offering of 155,000 francs.

Most wonderful of all were the night meetings, when men and women, black and white, knelt together in the damp sand of the outdoor tabernacle to seek cleansing and empowering. And on the last night, after an extended altar service, those who had touched God stood in the drizzling dampness for a chance to testify, until the rain drove them indoors, and the prayer meeting continued in the dormitories.

Yes, treasures of darkness! Gems dug from the depths of pagan degradation, now shining brightly in blackest heathenism! How truly African! The Dark Continent produces 98% of the world's diamonds. But diamonds' ornamental value is far exceeded by their industrial worth. Today's machine steel will respond only to diamond cutting. In pagan Ivory Coast Satan's steel shackles yield only to the cutting power of Bible-trained, Spirit-filled gems mined from the darkest depths. They have given their treasure freely for the work of their tribal church. Only by more of your treasures can the Mission complete its great unfinished task in the Ivory Coast's deepening darkness.